Manga
Sci-Fi

poison candy

毒飴

A new world, a new life, a new future…but all Sam Chance can think about is the past, a past that has moved along without him.

A hundred years in the future, most everyone he knows is dead, and those who aren't will be soon.

But Henry Raven is still alive, and the SKAR disease has been cured. This points to a world that may be run by the corporations, for whom an army of orphaned psycho-kinetic teenage super soldiers may turn out to be a way to maintain power.

But teenagers have a penchant for rebellion.

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THE MANGA REVOLUTION • LEADING
漫画革命
THE MANGA REVOLUTION • LEADING

EMPIRE

SCI-FI

OT
OLDER TEEN
AGE 16+

TOKYOPOP AGE RATING
MAY INCLUDE:
MODERATE SEXUALITY
MODERATE VIOLENCE

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DAVID HINE HANS STEINBACH

VOLUME TWO

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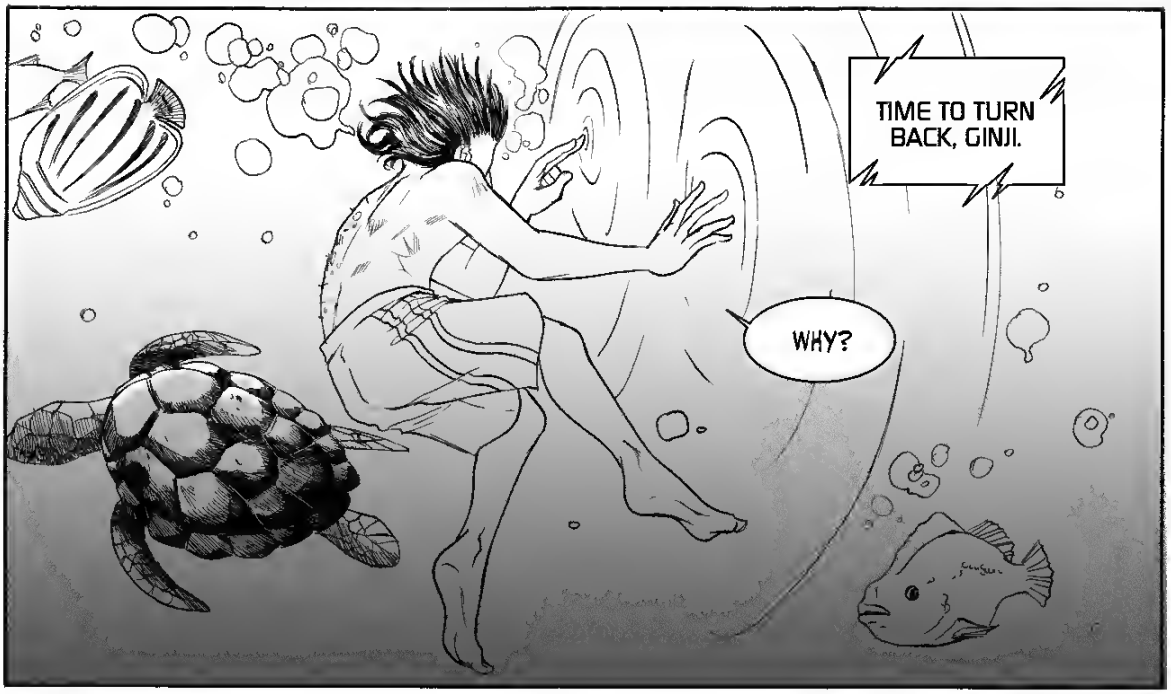
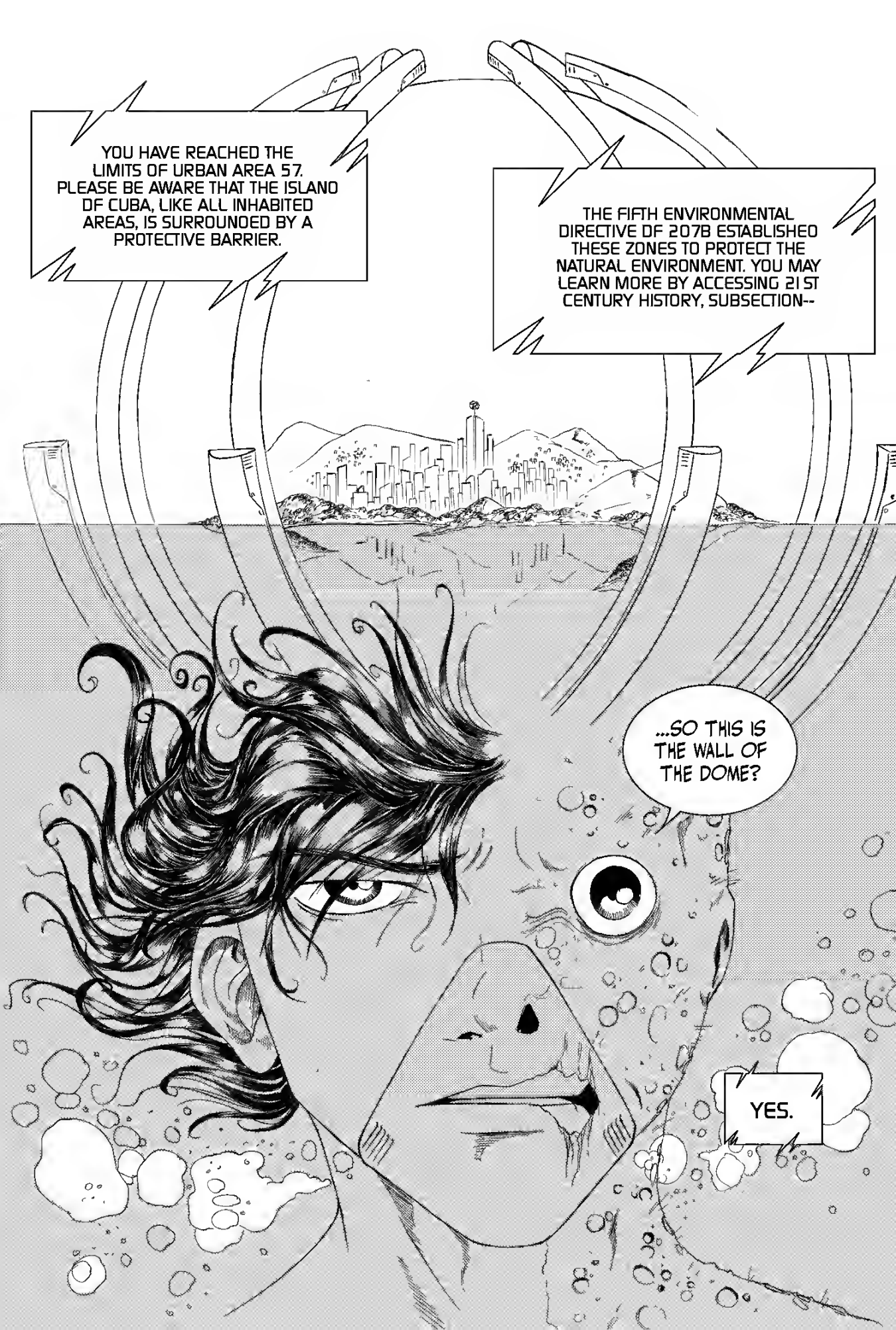
2110 A.D.
THE COASTAL WATERS
OFF CUBA.
CHAPTER 1: PASSING THROUGH

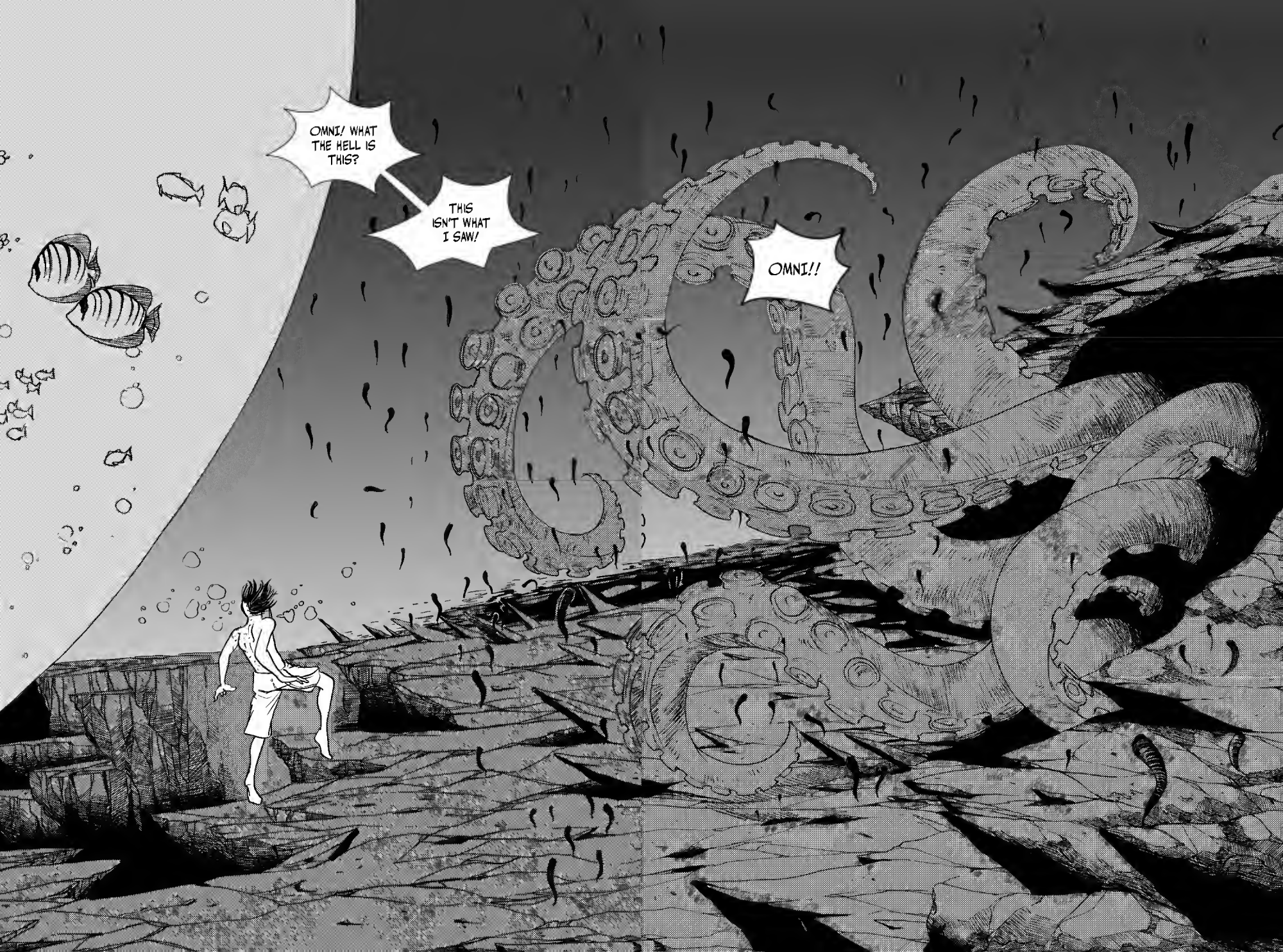

TIME TO TURN BACK, GINJI.
WHY?

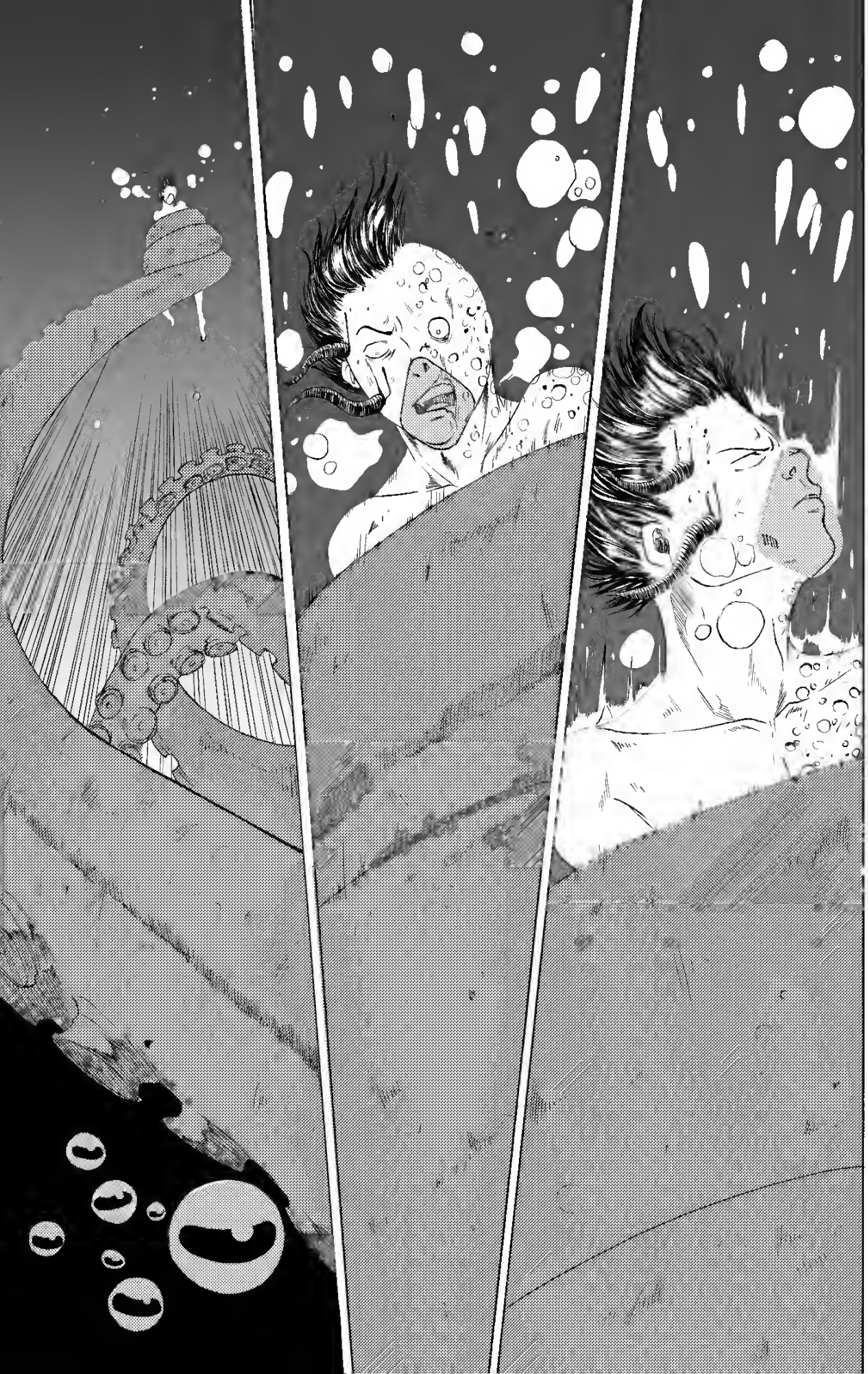

YOU HAVE REACHED THE LIMITS OF URBAN AREA 57. PLEASE BE AWARE THAT THE ISLAND OF CUBA, LIKE ALL INHABITED AREAS, IS SURROUNDED BY A PROTECTIVE BARRIER.
THE FIFTH ENVIRONMENTAL DIRECTIVE OF 2078 ESTABLISHED THESE ZONES TO PROTECT THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT. YOU MAY LEARN MORE BY ACCESSING 21ST CENTURY HISTORY, SUBSECTION--
...SO THIS IS THE WALL OF THE DOME?
YES.

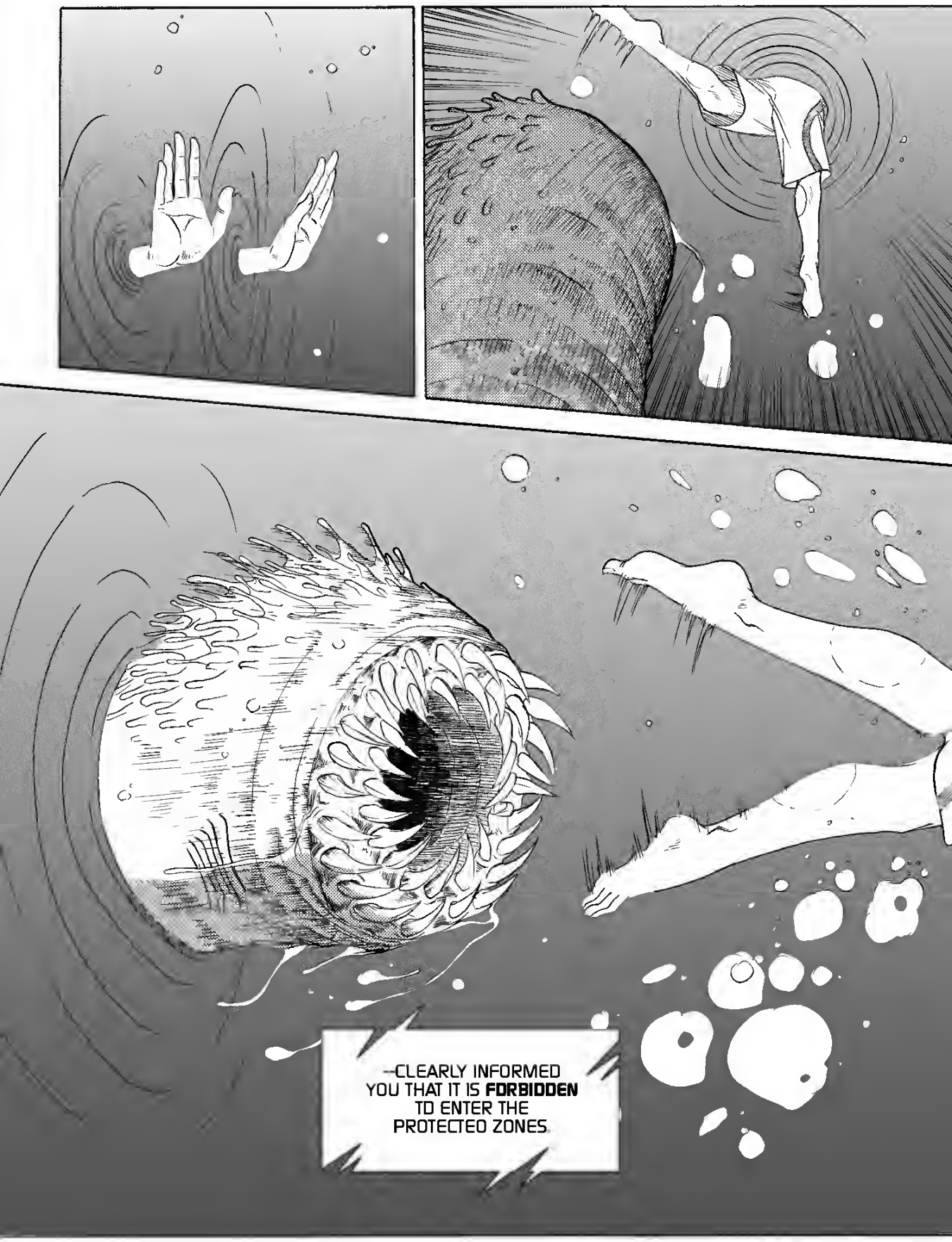
WOW! IT LOOKS AMAZING OUT THERE.
INDEED. WITHOUT THE INTRUSION OF HUMANS, THE WORLD'S OCEANS HAVE MADE A REMARKABLE RECOVERY.
...NO OFFENSE...
NONE TAKEN.

I WANT TO GO THROUGH.
SORRY, THAT ISN'T POSSIBLE.
NO?
IN THE SENSE THAT IT'S ILLEGAL. ALSO THE BARRIER IS IMPENETRABLE. IT ISN'T PHYSICALLY POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO GO PASS THROUGH.
RIGHT.
YOU SHOULD UPDATE YOUR MEMORY BANKS, OR WHEREVER YOU SUPER-COMPUTERS STORE YOUR INFO.
I'M A SKAR...

...THE RULES DON'T APPLY.
TURN BACK, GINJI HINO!
YOU ARE IN DAN--
KSSSSSKK--
...

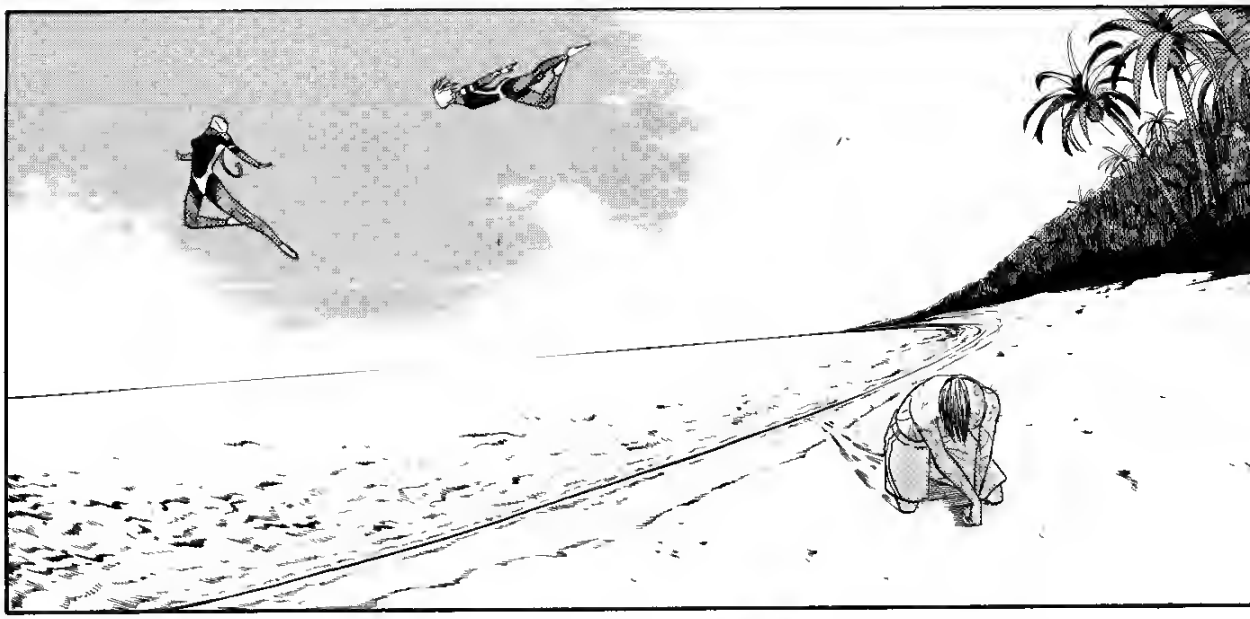

OMNI! WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?
THIS ISN'T WHAT I SAW!
OMNI!!

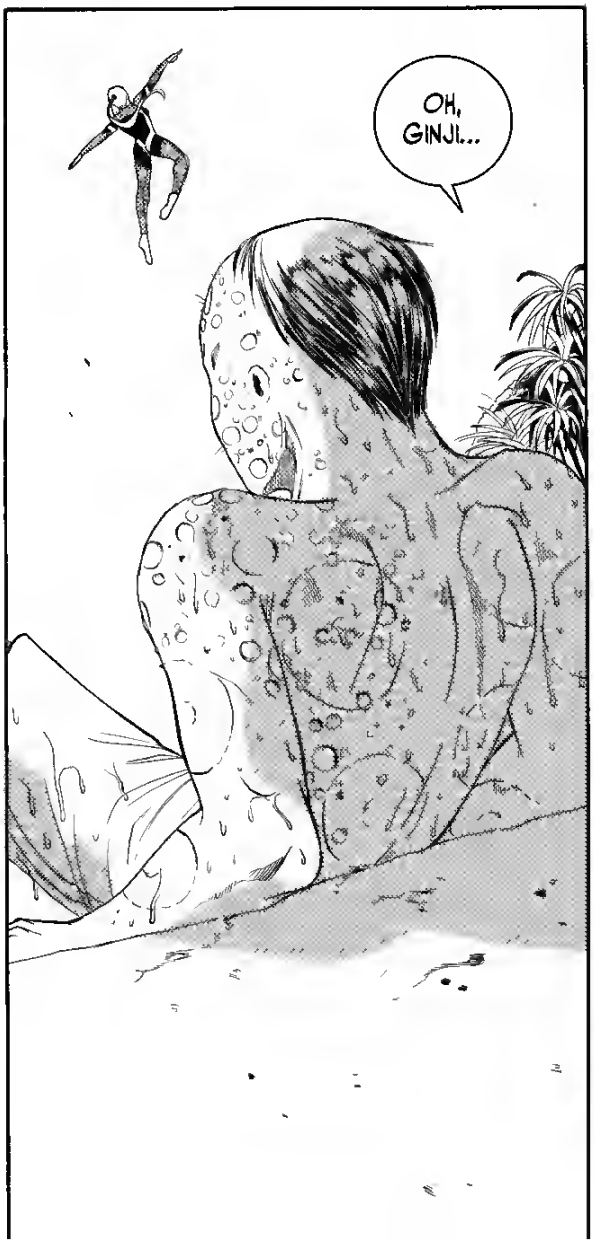


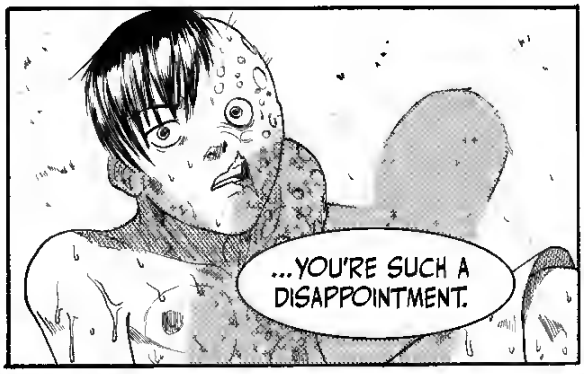

—CLEARLY INFORMED YOU THAT IT IS **FORBIDDEN** TO ENTER THE PROTECTED ZONES.

TH-THE BARRIER IS PROJECTING SOME KIND OF HOLOGRAM!
THAT IS *NOT* WHAT'S OUT THERE!
THIS BREACH OF REGULATIONS HAS BEEN REPORTED TO THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITY.
YOU'RE NOT ACCUSTOMED TO USING THE LAMELLA MASK TO BREATH SEA WATER. IRREGULAR OXYGEN INTAKE IS AFFECTING YOUR PERCEPTIONS.
YOU ARE EXPERIENCING AN HALLUCINATION.

FOR IMAGINARY INJURIES FROM MY HALLUCINATIONS?
PLEASE MAKE YOUR WAY BACK TO SHORE THE FACILITY HAS BEEN INFORMED. THEY'LL ARRANGE A MEDIC TO CHECK YOU OVER.
I'M AFRAID SOME OF THEM ALREADY DESPISE YOU.
I RECOMMEND THAT YOU DO NOT MENTION WHAT YOU THINK YOU SAW TO THE OTHERS.




OH, GINJI...


...YOU'RE SUCH A DISAPPOINTMENT.

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO WITH YOU?

WHUMMM!
IT LOOKS LIKE SAMUEL CHANCE IS AWAKE.
WE SHOULD SAY HELLO.

WHAT HAPPENED?
IS ANYONE HURT?
SOMEONE'S BEEN SHOWING OFF.
SAM JUST FOUND OUT THAT ALMOST EVERYONE HE EVER KNEW IS DEAD.
AH.
WE FOUND IT TREMENDOUSLY LIBERATING, DIDN'T WE, ASTRID?
...

WOULD YOU MIND LEAVING ME ALONE WITH SAM?
WE HAVE SOME THINGS TO--
AHH!
SAY PLEASE.
OR WHAT? YOU'LL BEAT ME UP? KILL ME?
MY GOD, LOOK AT YOU...

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE SO *OLD?*
OF COURSE YOU'RE NOT AFRAID OF ME.
YOU *WANT* TO DIE, DON'T YOU?
NOT YET.

OMNI, WOULD YOU SEND A SECURITY TEAM TO ROOM TWO FORTY-ONE?
NO NEED.
WE'RE LEAVING.
HOW DID YOU KNOW--?
WE WOULDN'T EVEN HAVE WORKED UP A SWEAT.
--WE CAN DO SO MUCH MORE THAN YOU IMAGINE.
ONE SECURITY TEAM?

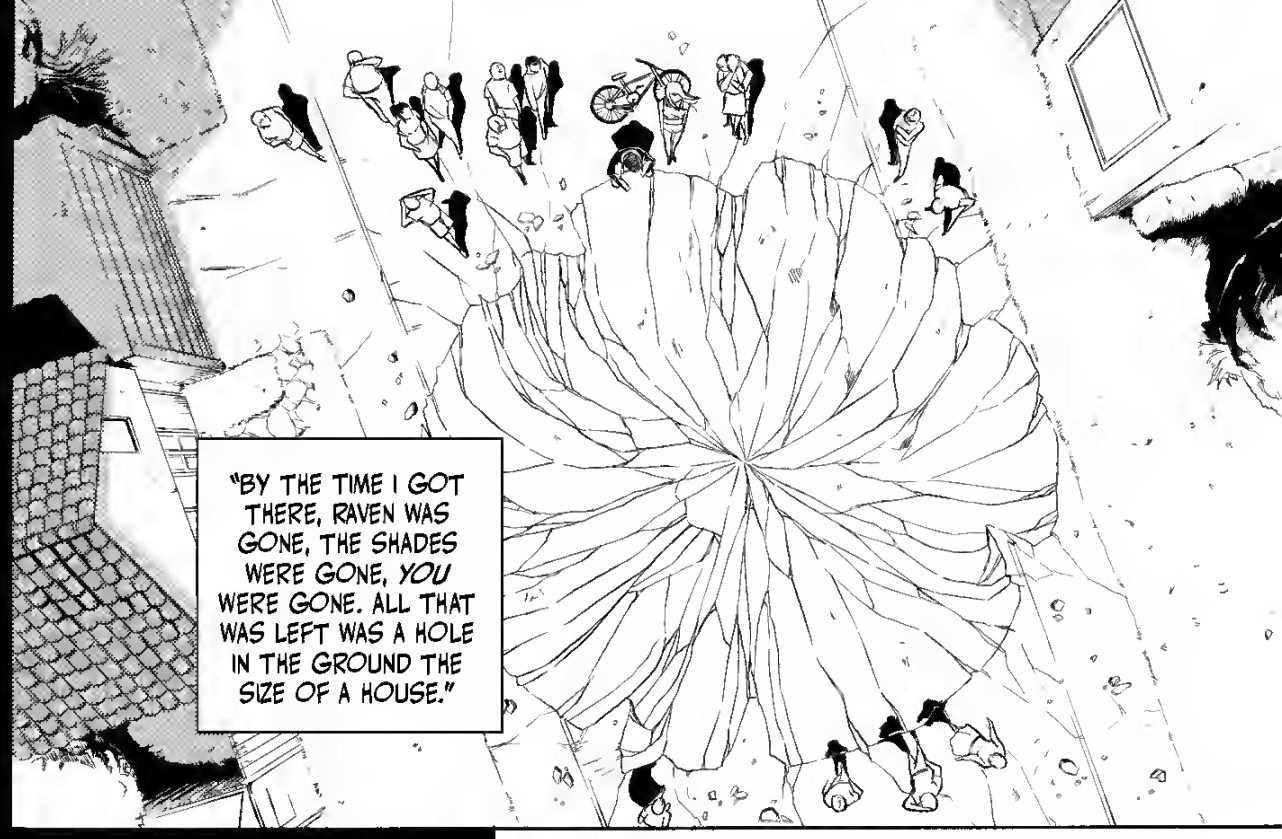
HMMM...
PUT YUSUF DOWN...
...PLEASE.
THERE.
NO HARM DONE.
WE'LL SEE YOU LATER, SAMUEL.
CIAO.

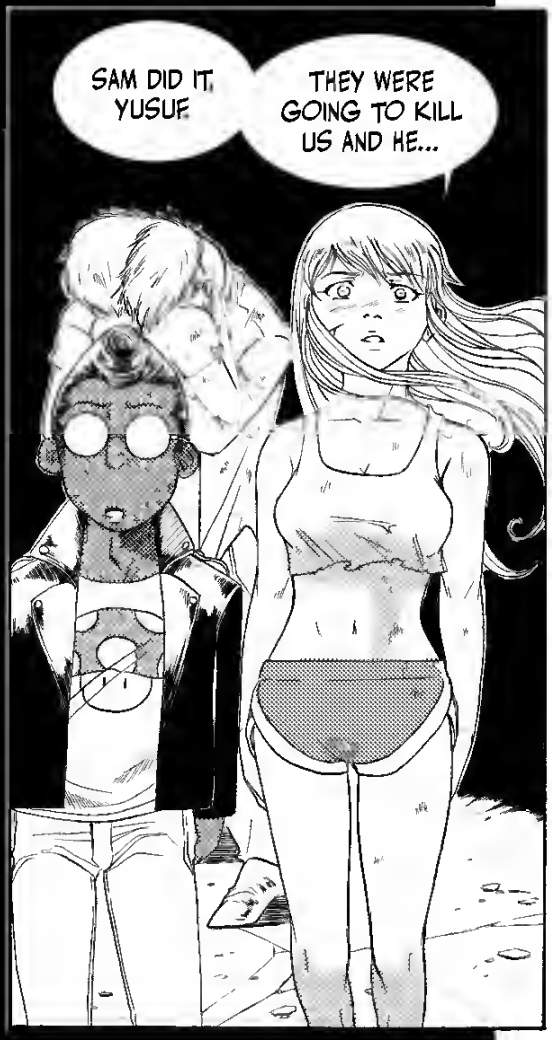
IF YOU NEED ANYTHING--
WE'RE FINE.
WHHHSSHHH
STILL SAVING MY ASS FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD BULLIES.
GUESS IT'S IN MY GENES.

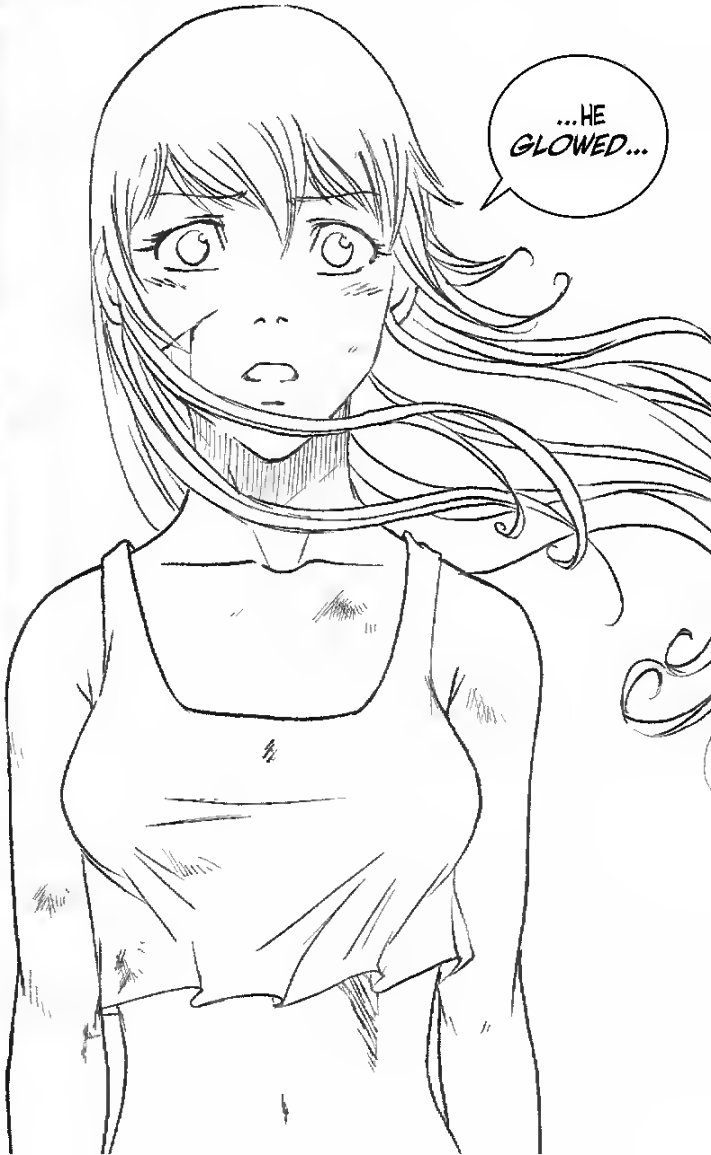
SO... TELL ME...
WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS?
DO YOU THINK YOU'RE READY TO HEAR IT? YOUR PARENTS? DONNA?
JUST TELL IT, YUSUF. EVERYTHING YOU REMEMBER.
OH, I DON'T HAVE ANY TROUBLE REMEMBERING.
YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE THE THINGS THEY CAN DO NOW. MEMORY ENHANCING NANO-SURGERY, DRUGS THAT REDUCE BRAIN-CELL LOSS TO VIRTUALLY ZERO.
I REMEMBER THE NIGHT YOU LEFT LIKE IT WAS YESTERDAY...

"DONNA FILLED ME IN LATER, THE WHOLE INSANE STORY. HOW HENRY RAVEN, *THE* HENRY RAVEN CAME LOOKING FOR YOU BECAUSE YOU HAD THE SKAR VIRUS."
"THEN THOSE OTHER GUYS SHOWED UP. THE SHADES. WHO, ACCORDING TO RAVEN, WERE GOVERNMENT AGENTS. BLACK OPS."

CHAPTER 2: THE KICKS INSIDE


"BY THE TIME I GOT THERE, RAVEN WAS GONE, THE SHADES WERE GONE, *YOU* WERE GONE. ALL THAT WAS LEFT WAS A HOLE IN THE GROUND THE SIZE OF A HOUSE."

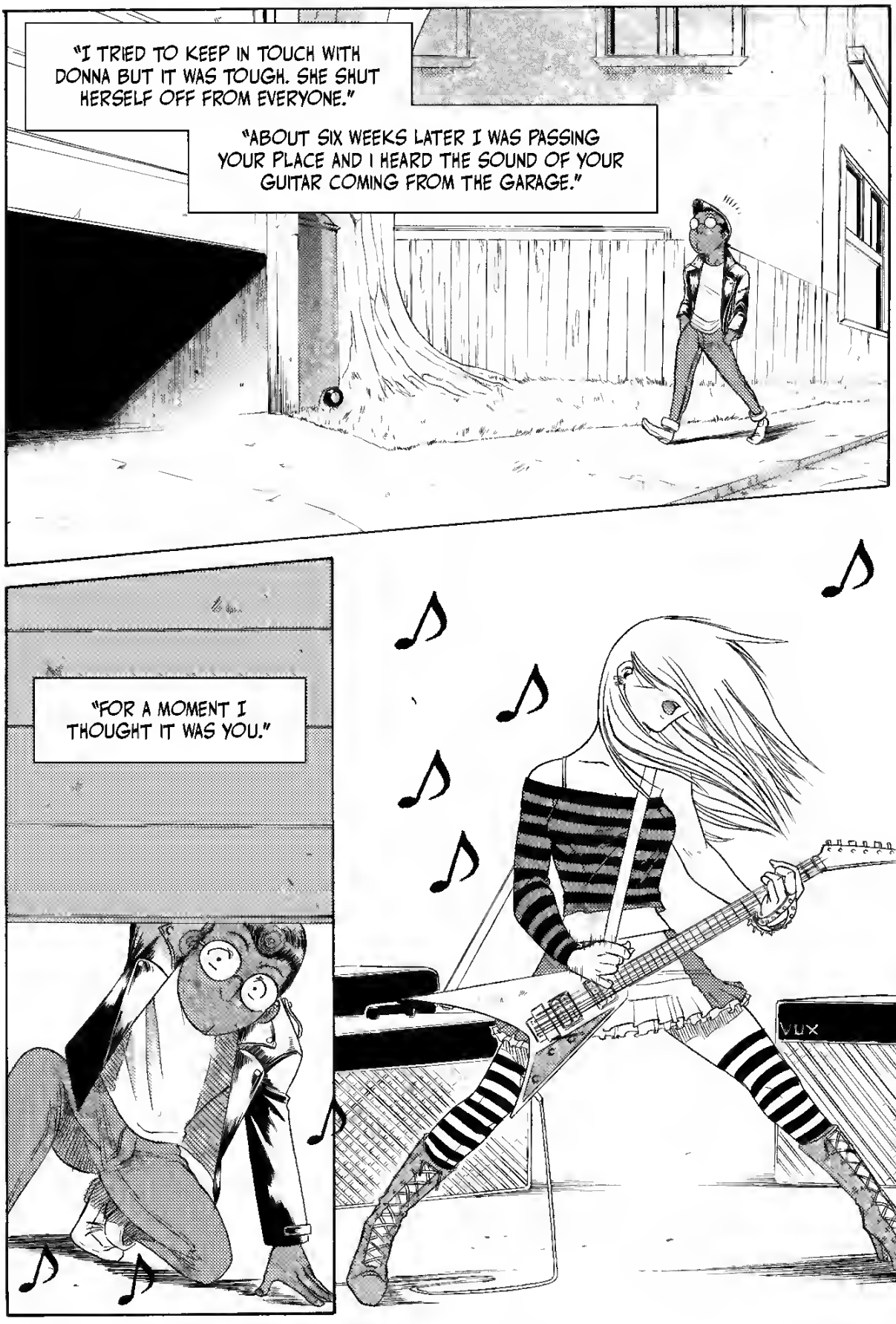

SAM DID IT, YUSUF
THEY WERE GOING TO KILL US AND HE...

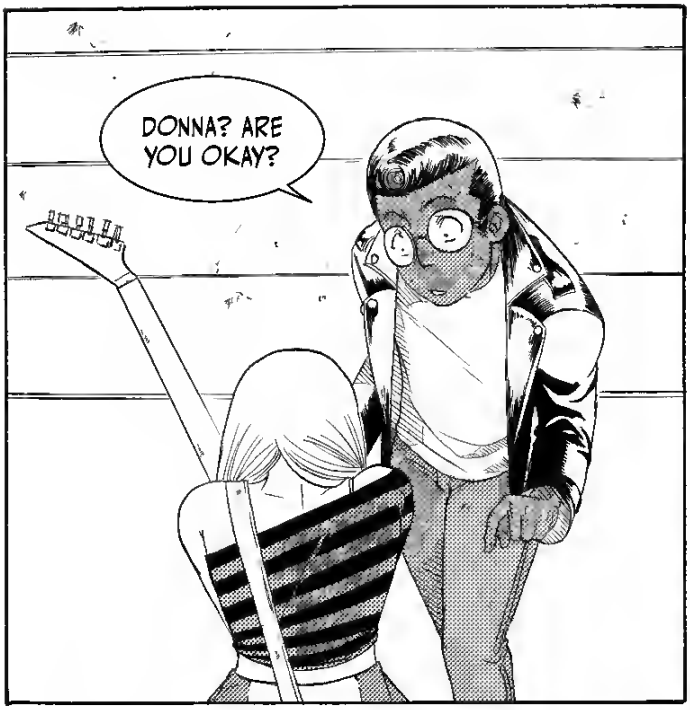

...HE *GLOWED*...

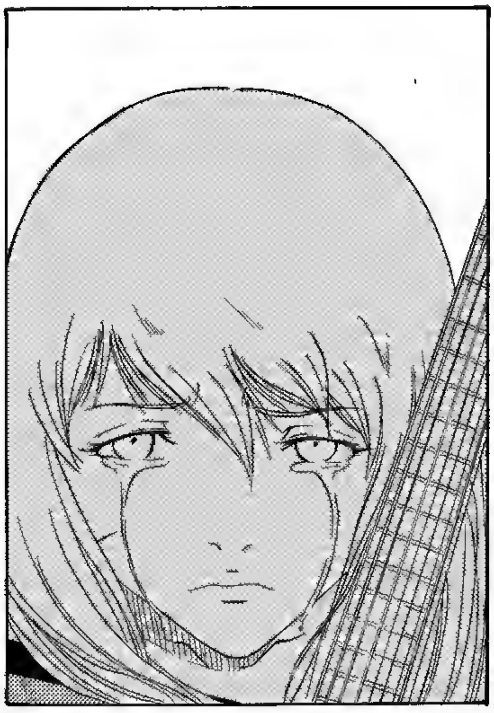
"THE NEXT DAY DONNA AND YOUR PARENTS WERE QUESTIONED FOR HOURS."
"NOT BY REGULAR COPS. THESE WERE SOMETHING ELSE. FBI OR CIA. THEY NEVER SAID."
ALL RIGHT MISS CHAMBERS. I'M GOING TO RUN THROUGH YOUR STATEMENT ONE LAST TIME.
YOU SAY HENRY RAVEN CAME TO YOUR BOYFRIEND'S HOME TO OFFER HIM SOME KIND OF CURE FOR THE SKAR VIRUS.
NOT A CURE.
THEY WERE GOING TO FREEZE HIM CRYOGENICALLY UNTIL THEY DEVELOPED A CURE.
THEN A GROUP OF TERRORISTS ARRIVED.
UH-HUH. FREEZE HIM. YEAH, I'VE GOT THAT.
THEY WERE GOVERNMENT AGENTS, NOT TERRORISTS.

I CAN ASSURE YOU, MISS CHAMBERS, NO UNITED STATES AGENCY GOES AROUND TERRORIZING CIVILIANS WITH ROCKET LAUNCHERS.
NOT IN *THIS* COUNTRY ANYWAY.
BELIEVE ME, THEY WERE TERRORISTS.
HOW DO YOU KNOW?
THIS ISN'T PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE YET, BUT IT WILL BE SOON, SO I SUPPOSE I CAN TELL YOU.
HENRY RAVEN LEFT THE USA LAST NIGHT IN A PRIVATE JET, HEADING FOR CUBA. THE PLANE NEVER ARRIVED.
WE BELIEVE A BOMB WAS DETONATED ON BOARD SOON AFTER IT LEFT AMERICAN AIRSPACE.

RESPONSIBILITY HAS BEEN CLAIMED BY THE UNITED NATION OF ISLAM, A TERRORIST GROUP THAT IS WELL-KNOWN TO US.
WE DO BELIEVE YOU MISS CHAMBERS. RAVEN *WAS* HERE LAST NIGHT AND HE WAS THE TARGET OF AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT.
BUT IF YOUR BOYFRIEND LEFT WITH HIM, THEN I'M AFRAID HE IS ALMOST CERTAINLY DEAD.
YOU HAVE MY CONDOLENCES.
...


"I TRIED TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH DONNA BUT IT WAS TOUGH. SHE SHUT HERSELF OFF FROM EVERYONE."
"ABOUT SIX WEEKS LATER I WAS PASSING YOUR PLACE AND I HEARD THE SOUND OF YOUR GUITAR COMING FROM THE GARAGE."
"FOR A MOMENT I THOUGHT IT WAS YOU."
VOX

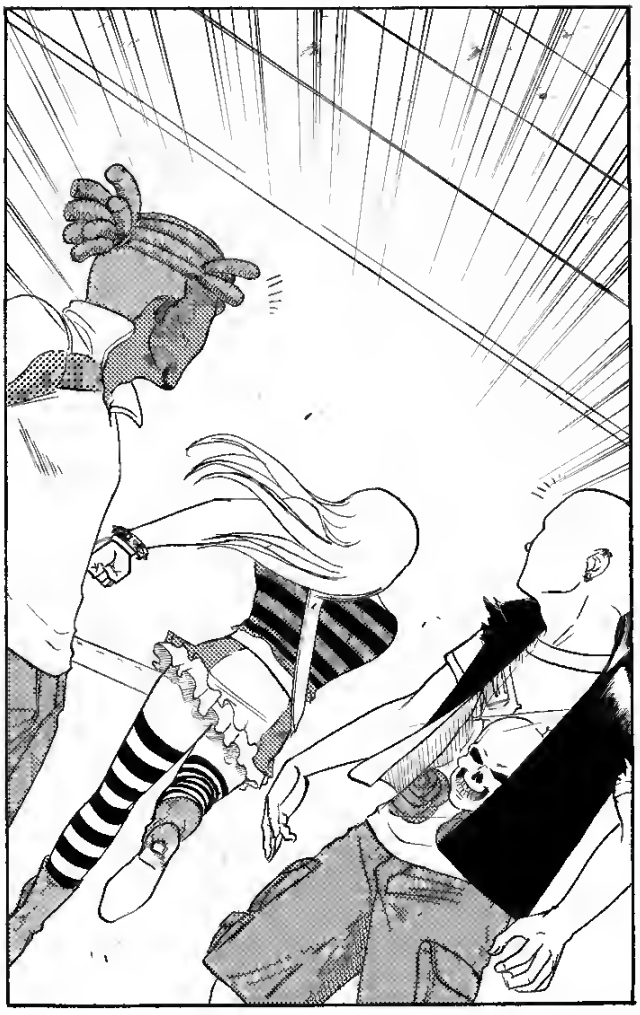

DONNA? ARE YOU OKAY?

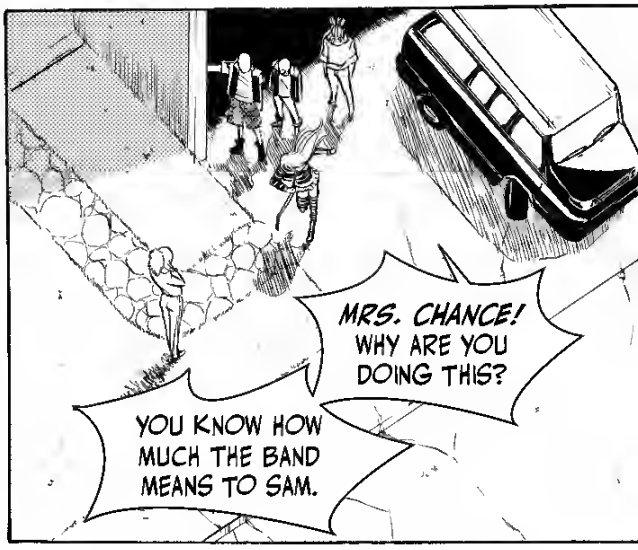


KLANNG
HEY DONNA, YOU GET THE MESSAGE?

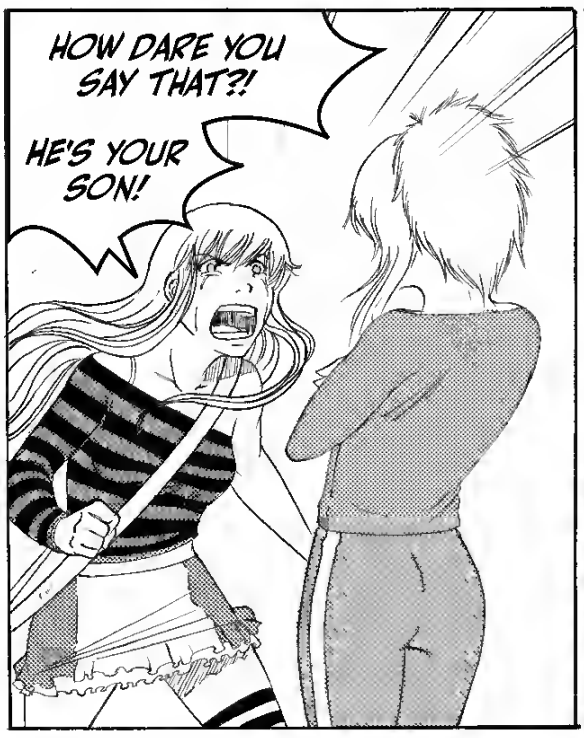
MESSAGE?
DID YOU COME TO PRACTICE?

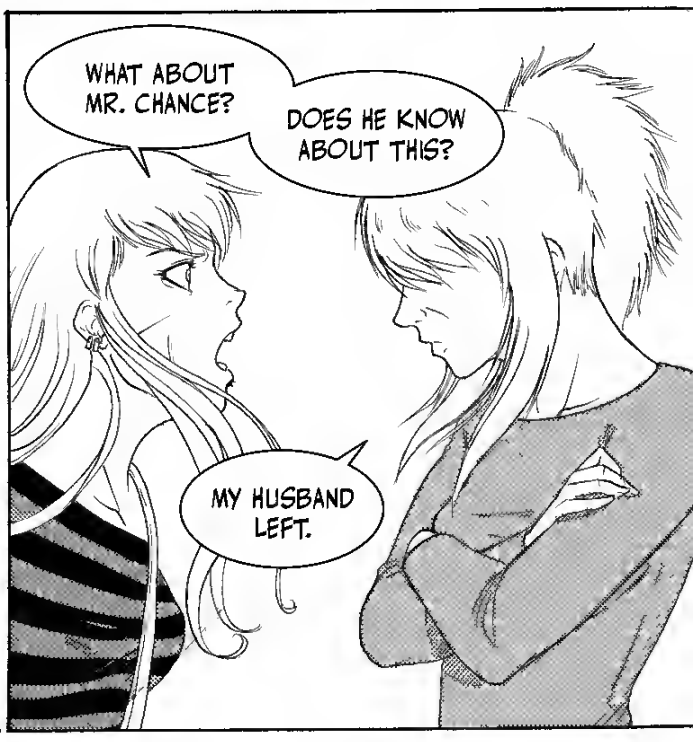
PRACTICE? UH...
WE CAME TO PICK UP THE GEAR.
THE GEAR STAYS.
SAM'S COMING BACK.
SURE. I KNOW.
BUT SAM'S OL' LADY CALLED US TO COME BY AND TAKE THE STUFF. SHE WANTS THE GARAGE CLEARED OUT.
HE'S COMING BACK!
LOOK, IF SAM...
...WHEN SAM COMES BACK WE'LL GET THE BAND BACK TOGETHER, Y'KNOW? WORD ON IT.

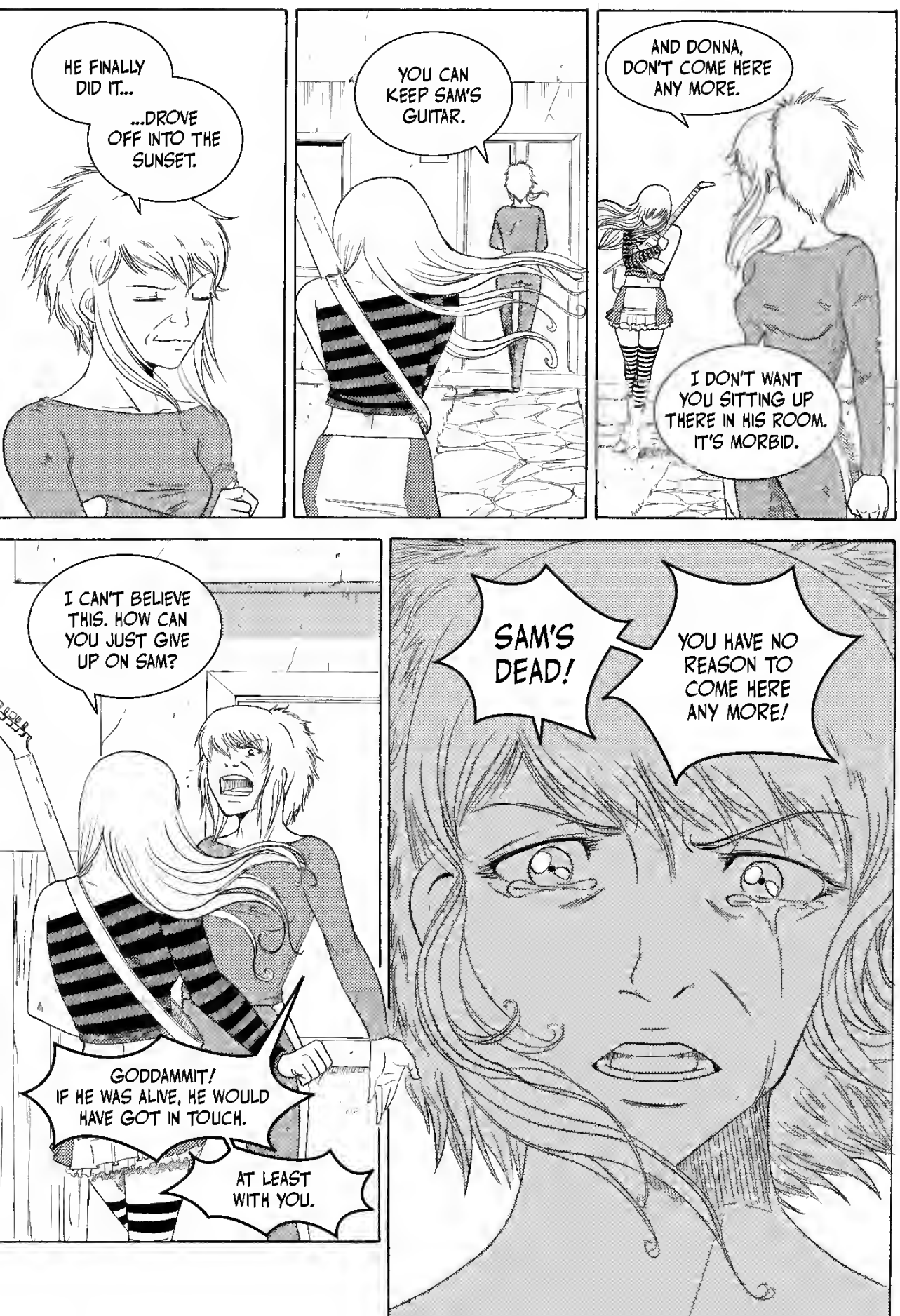



MRS. CHANCE! WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?
YOU KNOW HOW MUCH THE BAND MEANS TO SAM.

HE'S GONE, DONNA.
SAM'S GONE.


HOW DARE YOU SAY THAT?!
HE'S YOUR SON!


WHAT ABOUT MR. CHANCE?
DOES HE KNOW ABOUT THIS?
MY HUSBAND LEFT.


HE FINALLY DID IT...
...DROVE OFF INTO THE SUNSET.
YOU CAN KEEP SAM'S GUITAR.
AND DONNA, DON'T COME HERE ANY MORE.
I DON'T WANT YOU SITTING UP THERE IN HIS ROOM. IT'S MORBID.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS. HOW CAN YOU JUST GIVE UP ON SAM?
GODDAMMIT! IF HE WAS ALIVE, HE WOULD HAVE GOT IN TOUCH.
AT LEAST WITH YOU.
SAM'S DEAD!
YOU HAVE NO REASON TO COME HERE ANY MORE!

YES I DO!
I--
--I'M GOING TO HAVE SAM'S BABY.

SAM?
DID YOU HEAR ME?
YEAH.
I HEARD YOU.
...I'M A DAD...

IT'S MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT.
NO SHIT! I'VE GOT A HUNDRED-YEAR-OLD KID!
COMPLICATED DOESN'T EVEN BEGIN TO DESCRIBE HOW FUCKED-UP THIS IS.

YOU WANT ME TO CARRY ON?
JUST GIVE ME A MINUTE HERE...
...THEN YOU CAN TELL ME EVERYTHING.

NOT EVERYTHING, SAM. THERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW...

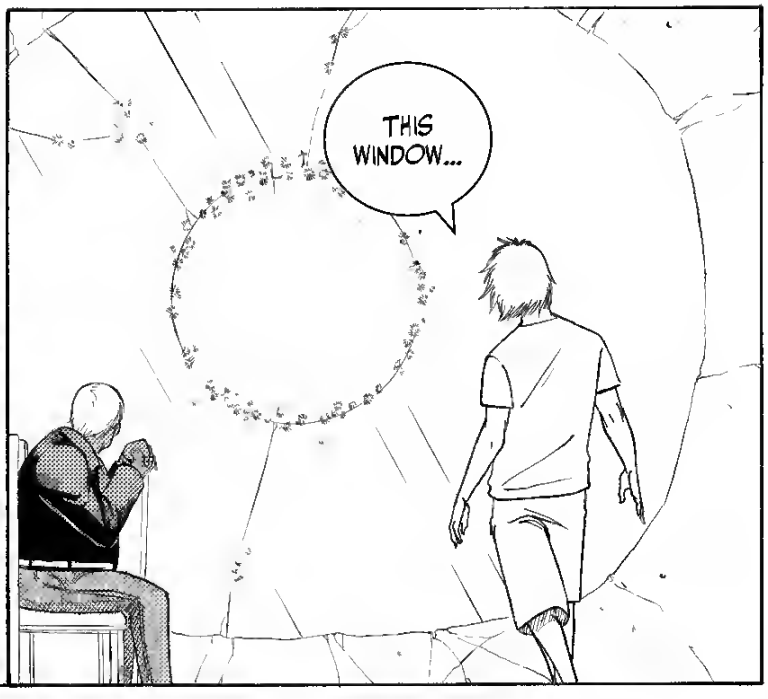
...LIKE WHAT HAPPENED WHEN I WENT TO SEE DONNA LATER THAT DAY.
515
CAN WE TALK?
I GUESS.
SO... UM...
...WOW!
A BABY!
GUITAR HERO
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?

I-I'LL HELP YOU WITH THE BABY.
WHAT?
SAM WAS MY BEST FRIEND.
SO... WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE HIS PLACE?!
TAKE HIS PLACE?
NUH--NO.
YOU THINK I NEVER NOTICED HOW YOU LOOKED AT US?
YOU THINK WE DIDN'T KNOW HOW YOU *FELT* ABOUT ME?

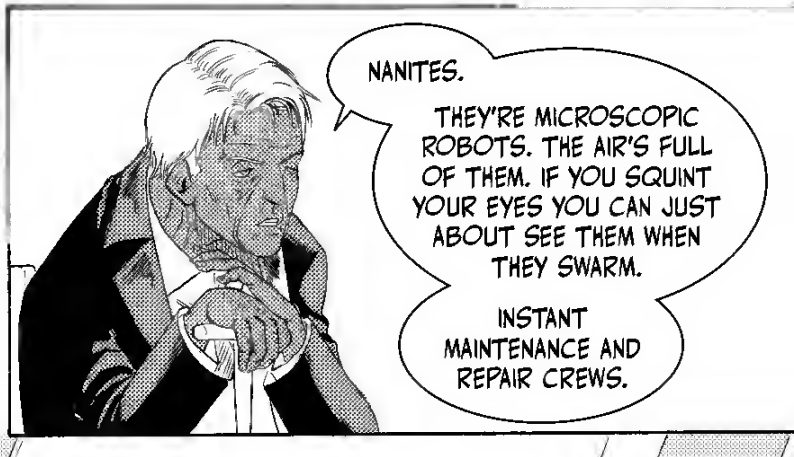
YOU'VE NEVER HAD A GIRLFRIEND HAVE YOU?
DONNA, STOP. PLEASE DON'T--
DON'T WHAT?
DON'T BE CRUEL?
DON'T BE MEAN TO POOR LITTLE YUSUF?
SAM'S BEEN GONE SIX WEEKS AND YOU THINK YOU CAN MOVE IN ON ME?
DO YOU EVEN KNOW HOW RIDICULOUS THAT IS?
I KNOW YOU'RE UPSET, DONNA.
I KNOW YOU DON'T MEAN THIS.
YOU HATED US BEING TOGETHER, DIDN'T YOU?
THE JEALOUSY WAS LEAKING OUT OF EVERY OILY PORE.

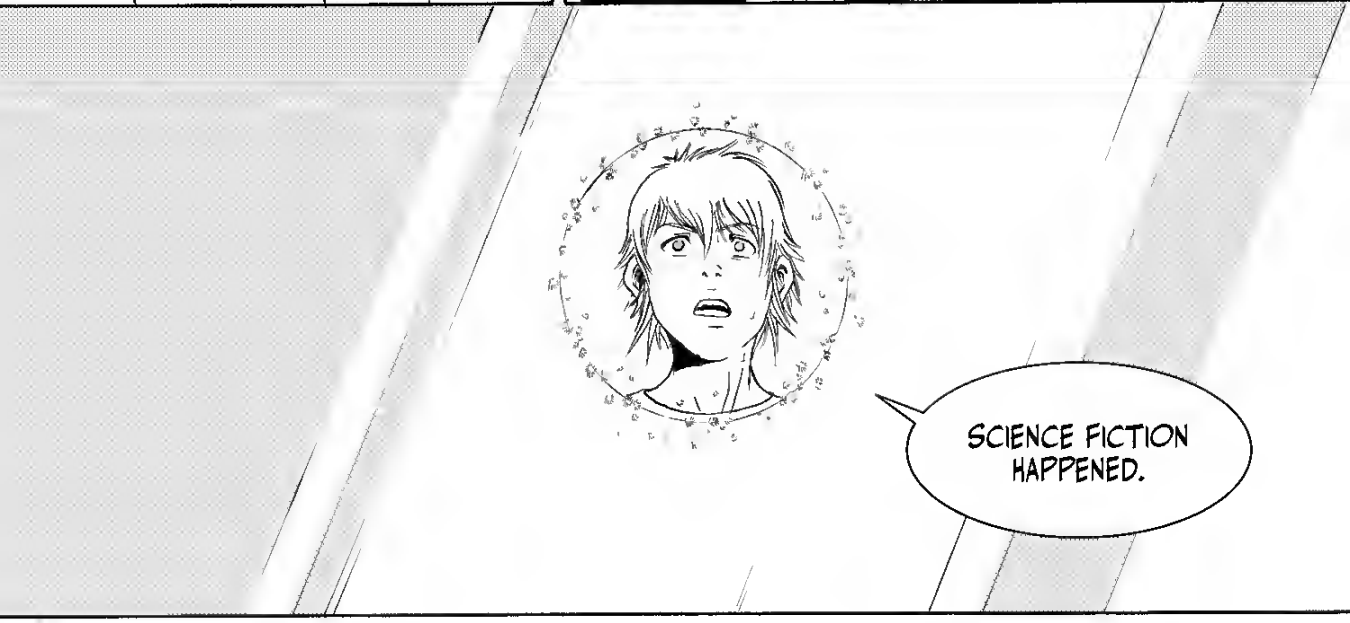
OKAY, YOU'RE RIGHT. I WAS JEALOUS.
IT HURT SEEING YOU TOGETHER.
I KNEW I NEVER STOOD A CHANCE WITH...
...WITH SAM.
...

SOME THINGS YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW.


THIS WINDOW...

THE GLASS IS REPAIRING ITSELF!


NANITES.
THEY'RE MICROSCOPIC ROBOTS. THE AIR'S FULL OF THEM. IF YOU SQUINT YOUR EYES YOU CAN JUST ABOUT SEE THEM WHEN THEY SWARM.
INSTANT MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR CREWS.

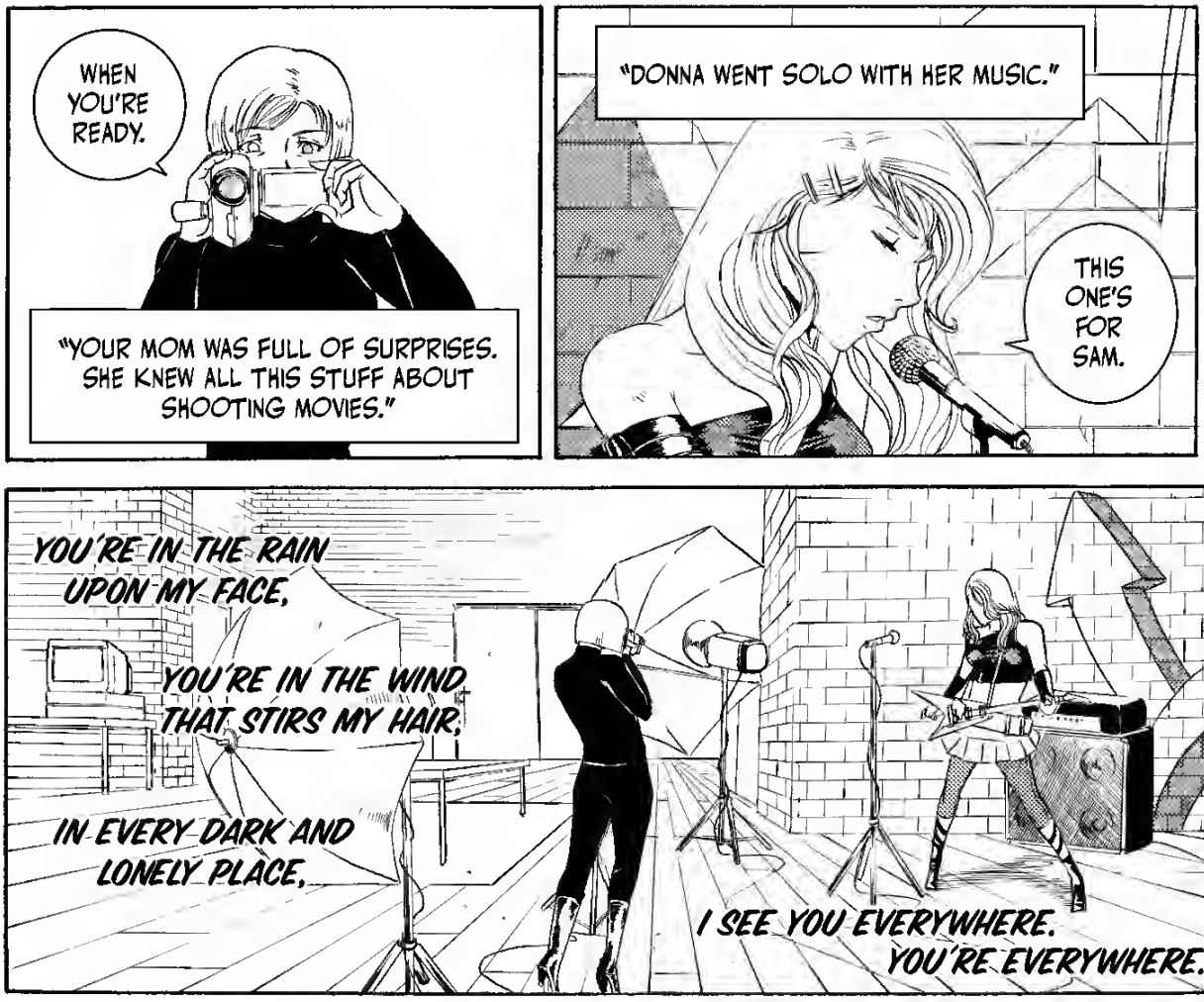

SCIENCE FICTION HAPPENED.

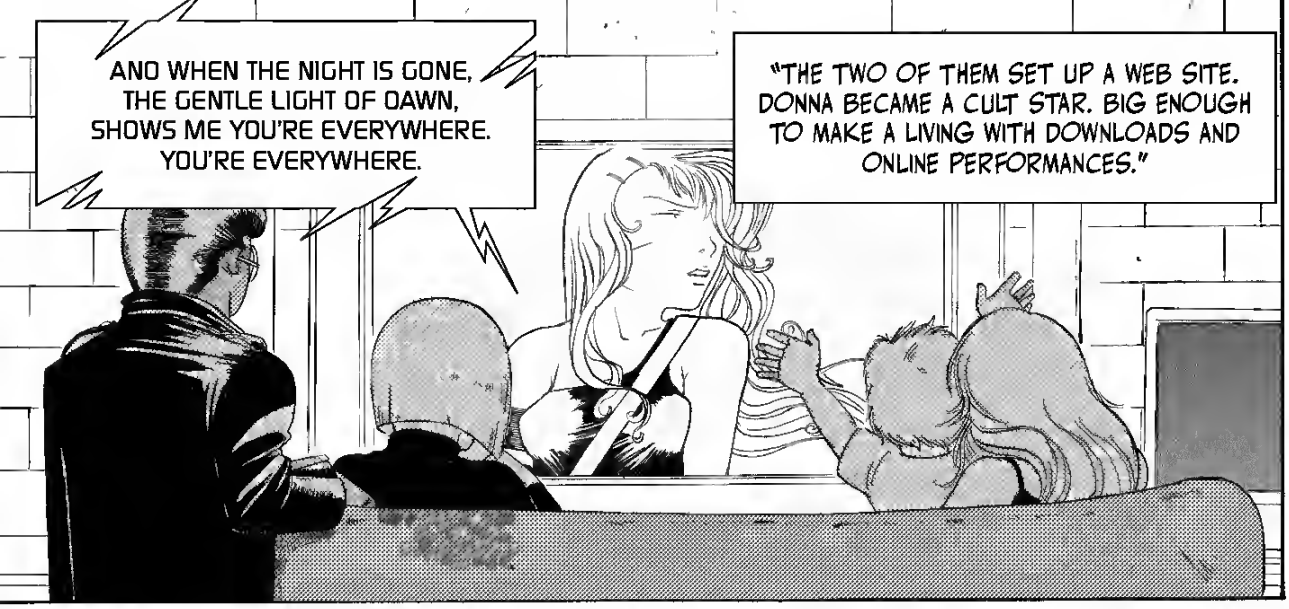
WAS IT A BOY OR A GIRL?
DONNA DID HAVE THE BABY?
YES.
YES. OF COURSE.

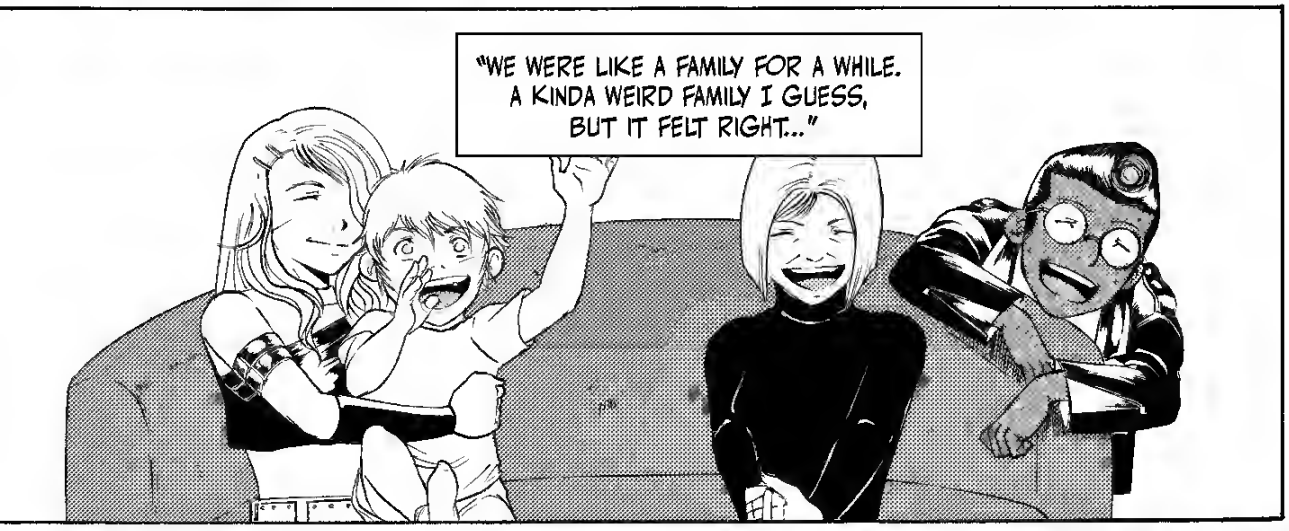
CHAPTER 3: SNAP SHOTS

YUFUF!
LOOK WHAT UNCLE YUSUF BROUGHT YOU.
THIS IS THE KING OF ROCK 'N' ROLL...
ELVIS!
YUFFUF!!

"YOUR MOTHER TOTALLY CHANGED AFTER YOU DISAPPEARED. SHE GAVE UP HER JOB, SOLD THE HOUSE AND BOUGHT THIS AMAZING STUDIO DOWN ON VENICE BEACH."
OKAY, DONNA. WE'RE ALL SET.
SHH, MARLOW. MOMMY'S GOING TO SING.
"SHE WENT THROUGH A TOTAL MAKEOVER. HAIR, CLOTHES, ATTITUDE... THE WORKS. SHE LOOKED LIKE A MIDDLE-AGED PUNK. BUT IN A COOL WAY."
"DONNA WAS GETTING HASSLES FROM HER PARENTS. I GUESS 'SINGLE MOTHER' WASN'T THE CAREER THEY HAD PLANNED FOR HER. SO WHEN MARLOW WAS BORN, YOUR MOTHER HAD THEM BOTH MOVE IN WITH HER."

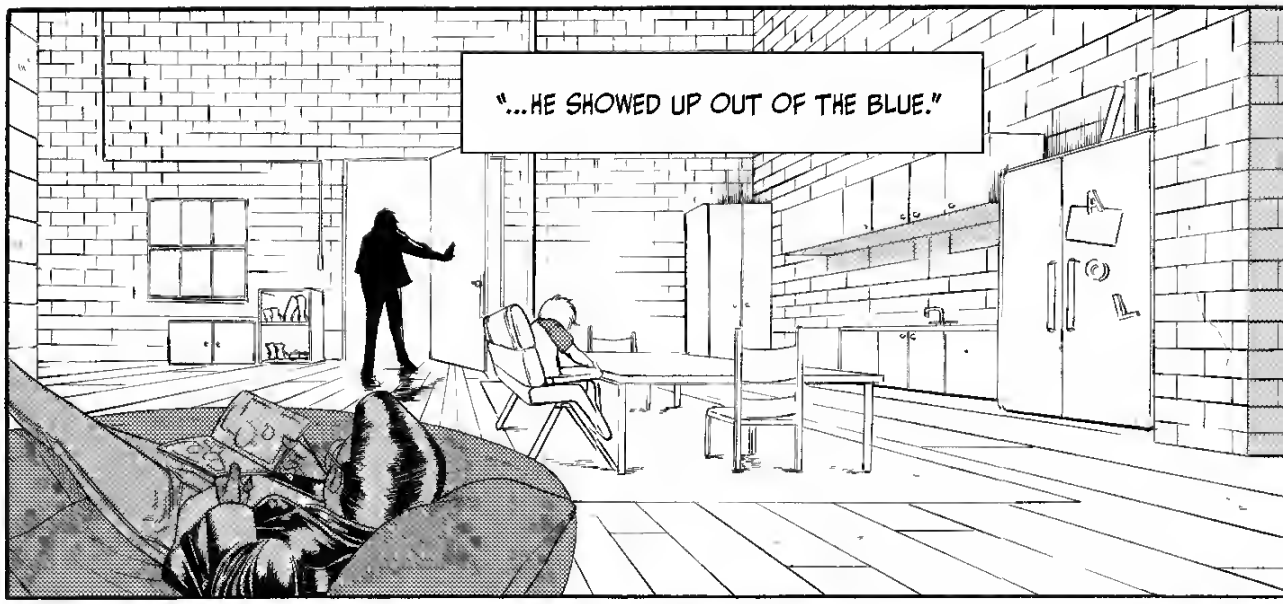

WHEN YOU'RE READY.
"YOUR MOM WAS FULL OF SURPRISES. SHE KNEW ALL THIS STUFF ABOUT SHOOTING MOVIES."
"DONNA WENT SOLO WITH HER MUSIC."
THIS ONE'S FOR SAM.
YOU'RE IN THE RAIN UPON MY FACE,
YOU'RE IN THE WIND THAT STIRS MY HAIR,
IN EVERY DARK AND LONELY PLACE,
I SEE YOU EVERYWHERE.
YOU'RE EVERYWHERE.
THEY SAY YOU WENT AWAY, I SAY IT ISN'T TRUE.
I NEVER LET YOU GO, I WILL NOT CRY FOR YOU.
YOU'RE IN THE MUSIC THAT I MAKE, YOU'RE IN EVERY STEP I TAKE.
I SEE YOU EVERYWHERE.
YOU'RE EVERYWHERE.


AND WHEN THE NIGHT IS GONE,
THE GENTLE LIGHT OF DAWN,
SHOWS ME YOU'RE EVERYWHERE.
YOU'RE EVERYWHERE.
"THE TWO OF THEM SET UP A WEB SITE. DONNA BECAME A CULT STAR. BIG ENOUGH TO MAKE A LIVING WITH DOWNLOADS AND ONLINE PERFORMANCES."


"WE WERE LIKE A FAMILY FOR A WHILE. A KINDA WEIRD FAMILY I GUESS, BUT IT FELT RIGHT..."

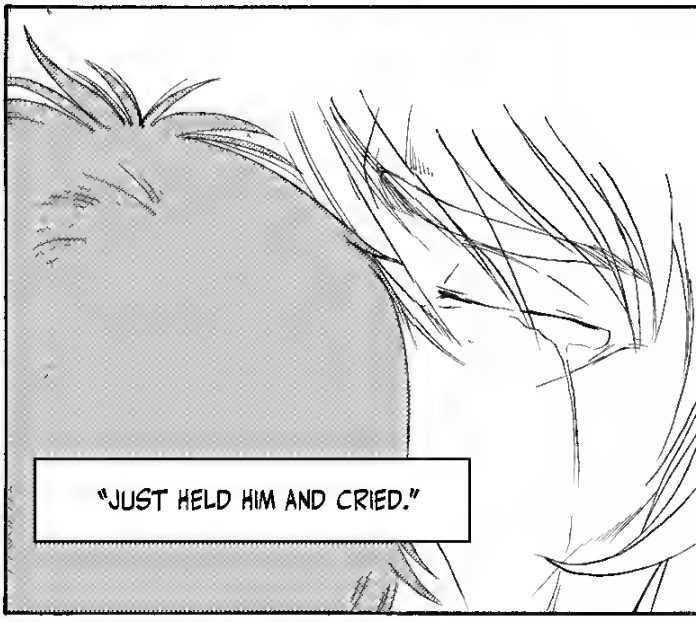
...EXCEPT YOU WEREN'T THERE.
WHAT ABOUT MY DAD?

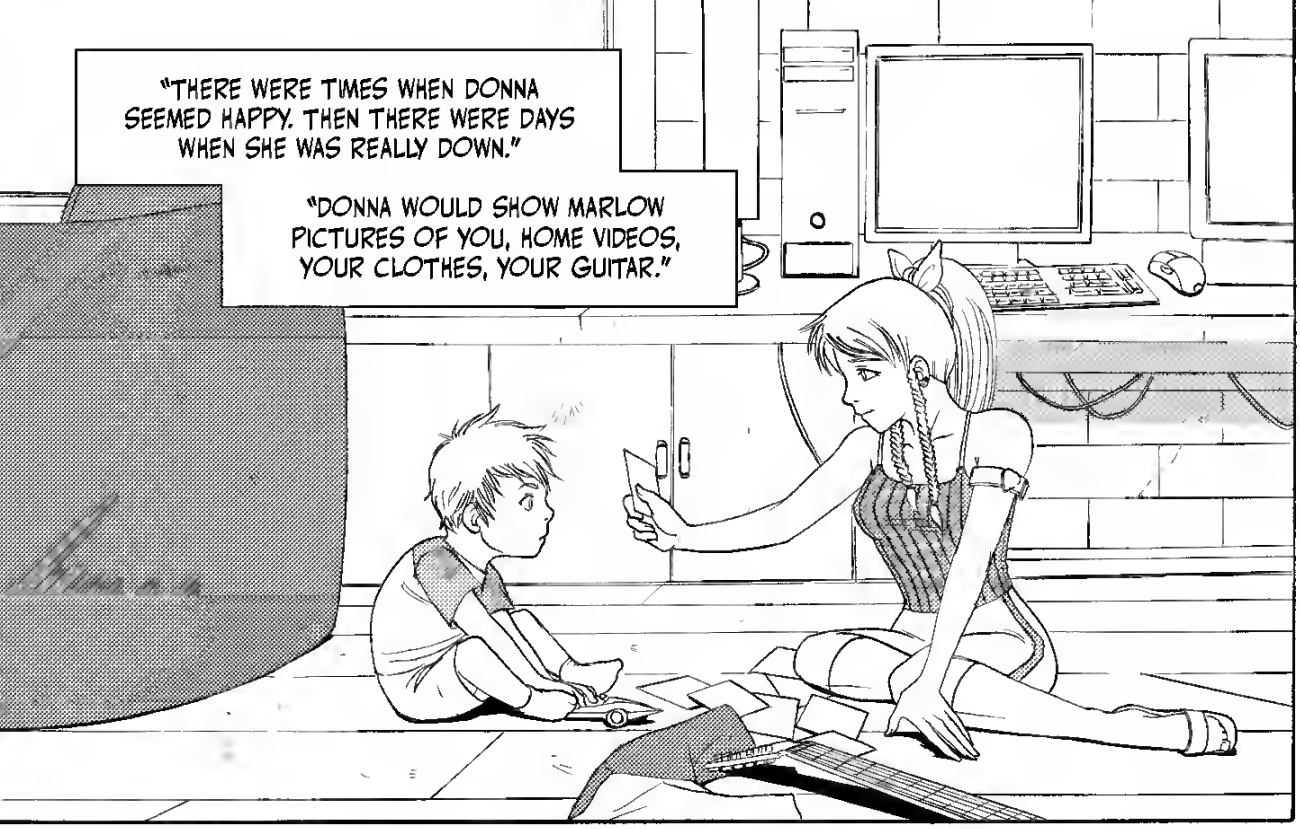
I ONLY SAW HIM ONCE...

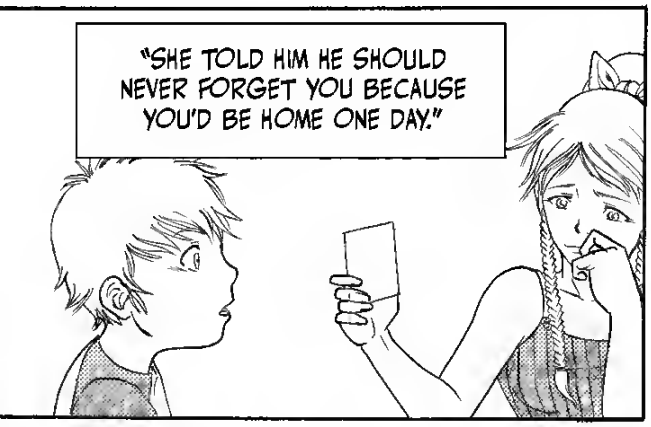

"...HE SHOWED UP OUT OF THE BLUE."

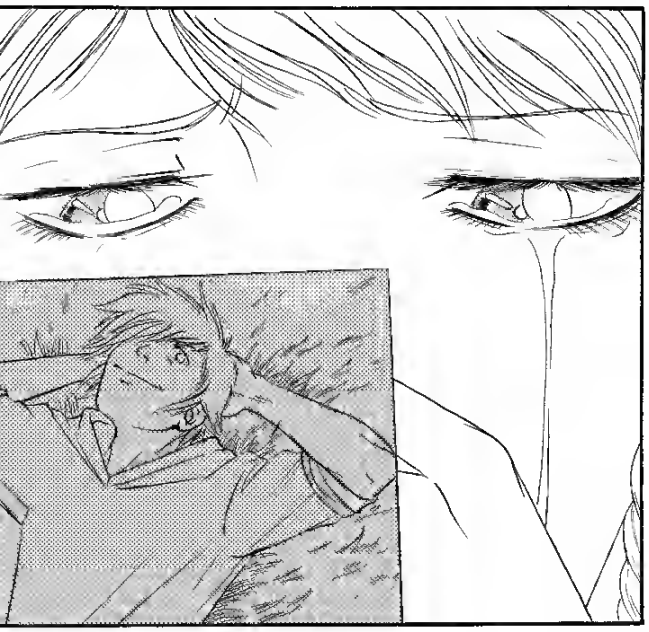
"HE DIDN'T LOOK SO HOT."
SO WHERE'S THIS GRANDSON OF MINE?

"HE HELD MARLOW FOR A LONG TIME."


"JUST HELD HIM AND CRIED."


"THERE WERE TIMES WHEN DONNA SEEMED HAPPY. THEN THERE WERE DAYS WHEN SHE WAS REALLY DOWN."
"DONNA WOULD SHOW MARLOW PICTURES OF YOU, HOME VIDEOS, YOUR CLOTHES, YOUR GUITAR."


"SHE TOLD HIM HE SHOULD NEVER FORGET YOU BECAUSE YOU'D BE HOME ONE DAY."



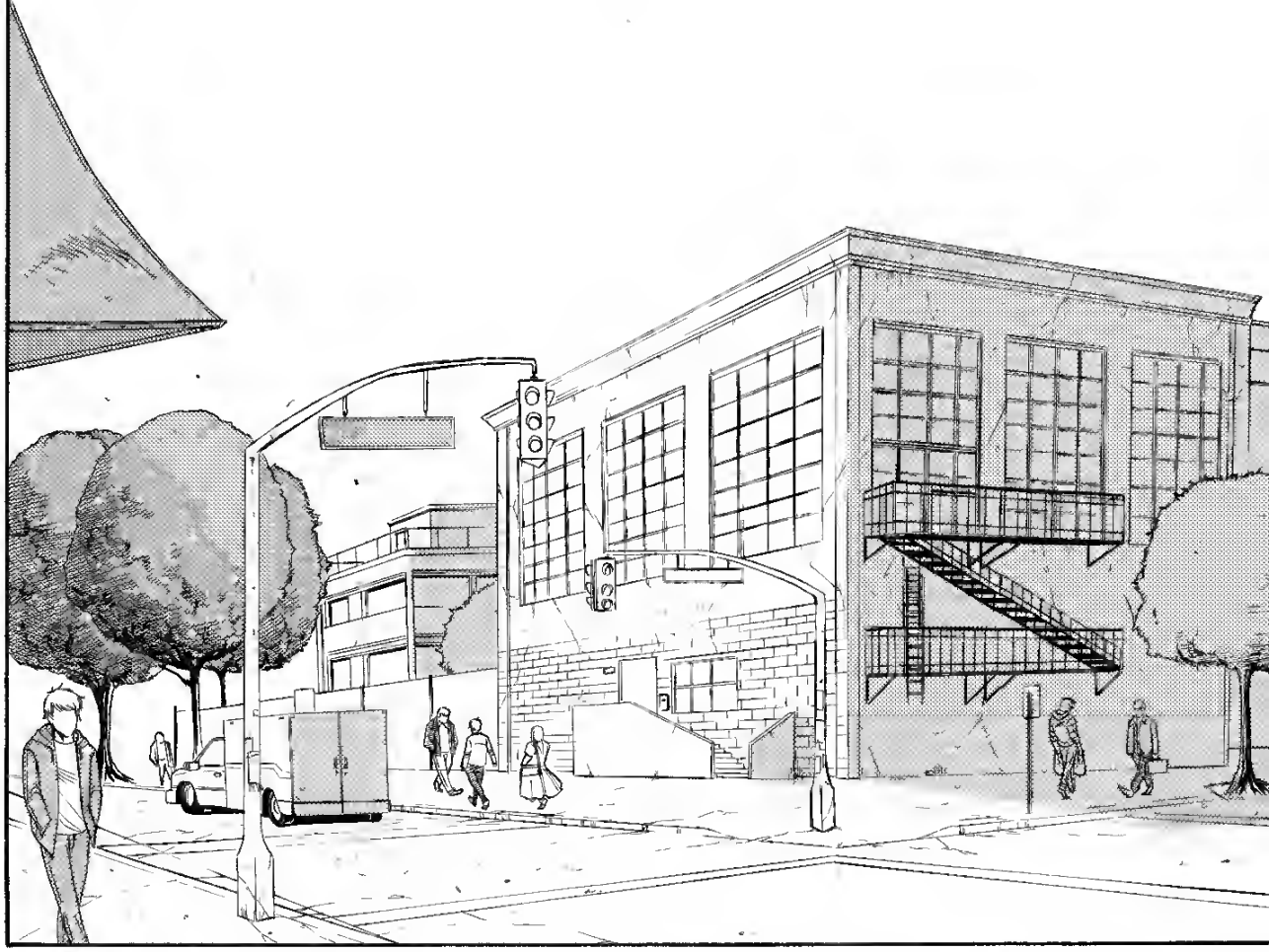
"I GUESS MARLOW JUST WANTED TO MAKE HER HAPPY..."
"...TO GIVE HER WHAT SHE WANTED MOST IN THE WORLD..."

DONNA.
DID YOU MISS ME?

DONNA, WHAT'S WRONG?
NO!
THIS NEVER HAPPENED!
IT ISN'T A RECORDING!
OH MY GOD! MARLOW!
YOU'RE DOING THIS, AREN'T YOU?

STOP IT! DO YOU HEAR ME?!
STOP IT!!!
MWLIH--

MUH-
MWWW-AAAA
MWWWAAAAH
WWWAAAAA
WHUMP
WHUMP
POP
POP



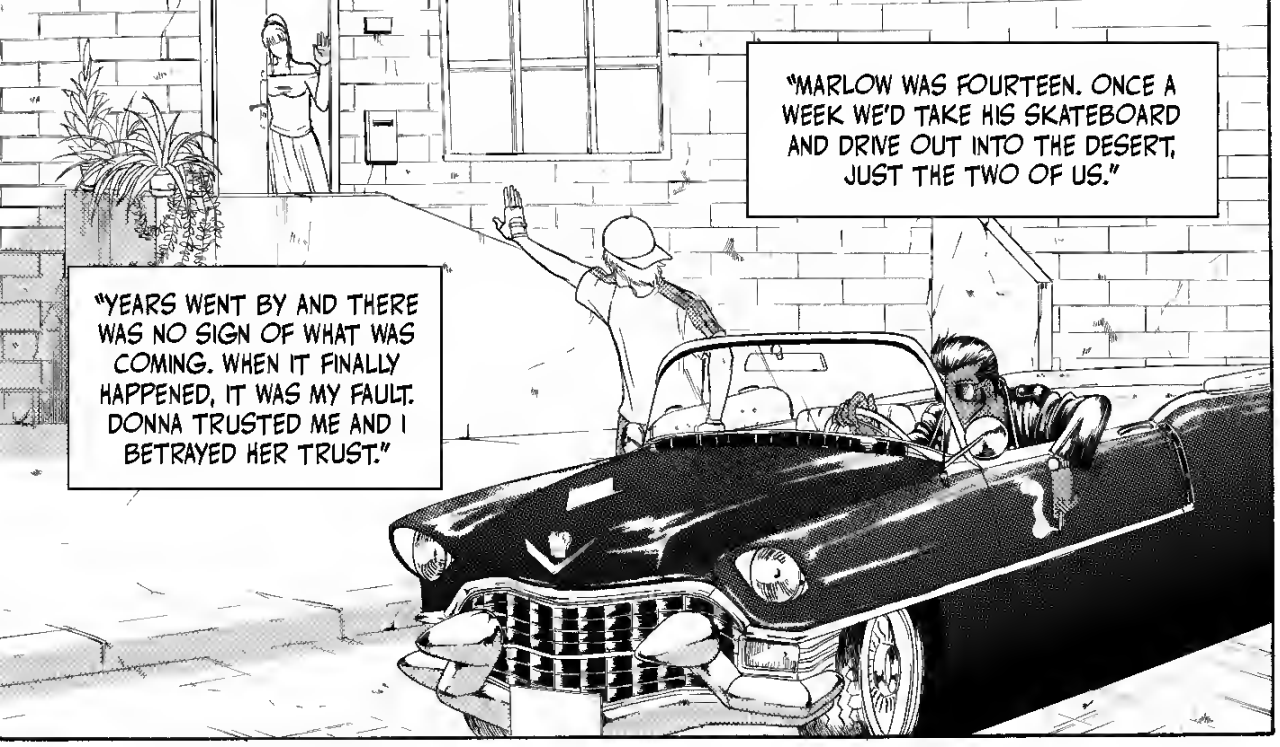
KERRRRASSH

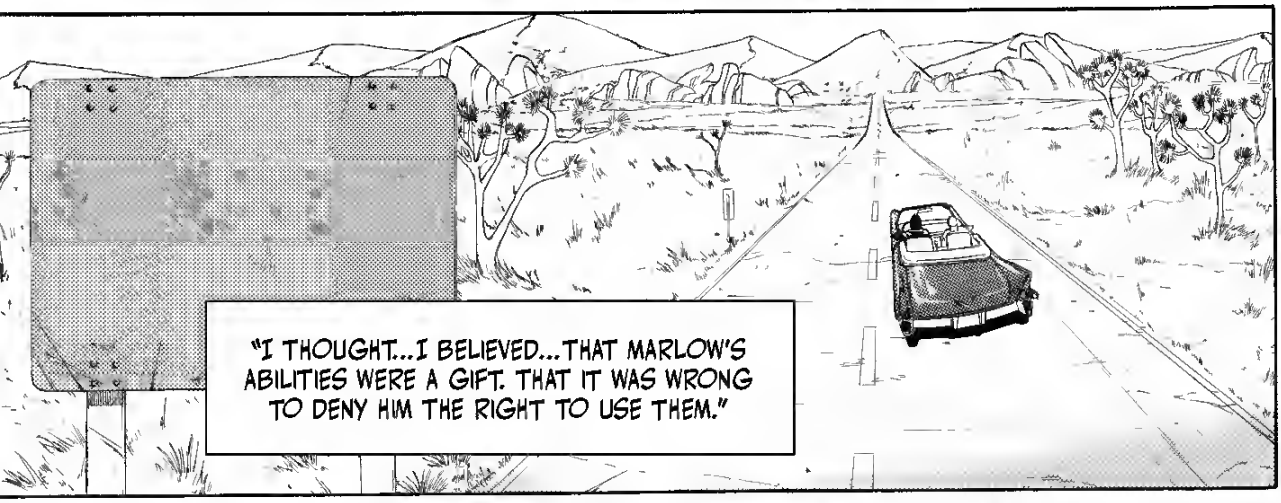
IT'S OKAY, MARLOW!
MOMMY'S SORRY.
LISTEN TO ME. YOU MUST NEVER DO THAT AGAIN.
NEVER.
IT'S NOT SAFE.

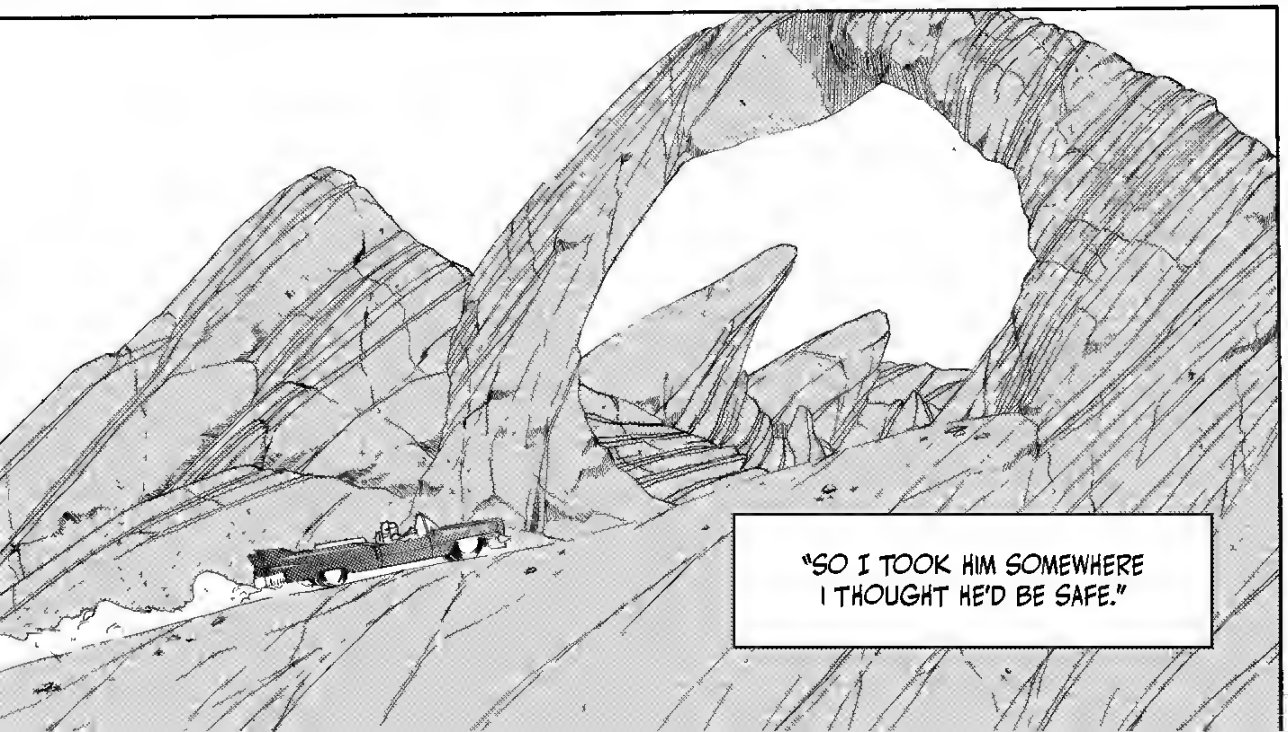
MAN, DID YOU SEE THAT?
THAT WAS UNREAL!

"HER FIRST BIG WORRY WAS THAT MARLOW HAD THE *SKAR* VIRUS. WHEN *YOU* DEVELOPED YOUR PARANORMAL POWERS THE VIRUS CAME WITH IT."
DONNA CHANGED AFTER THAT. SHE BECAME MORE AND MORE PARANOID.
THE WAY IT TURNED OUT, I GUESS SHE HAD GOOD REASON.
"BUT MARLOW WAS PERFECTLY HEALTHY. *UNNATURALLY* HEALTHY."
"I DON'T THINK HE EVER GOT SICK. NOT EVEN A HEAD COLD."
"DONNA EDUCATED HIM AT HOME. SHE NEVER LET HIM MIX WITH OTHER KIDS, HARDLY EVEN LET HIM GO OUTSIDE."

"SHE WAS CONVINCED THAT *THEY* WERE WATCHING."
"SOMETIMES *THEY* WERE RAVENCORP, SOMETIMES THE FBI, OR SHADES..."
"DONNA MADE MARLOW PROMISE NEVER TO USE HIS POWERS..."
"...BUT HOW COULD HE DO THAT?"
"SO HE MODIFIED HIS PROMISE. HE ONLY USED HIS POWERS WHEN THERE WAS NO ONE ELSE AROUND..."
"...EXCEPT ME."
"IT'S LIKE TELLING A BIRD NOT TO FLY."


"MARLOW WAS FOURTEEN. ONCE A WEEK WE'D TAKE HIS SKATEBOARD AND DRIVE OUT INTO THE DESERT, JUST THE TWO OF US."
"YEARS WENT BY AND THERE WAS NO SIGN OF WHAT WAS COMING. WHEN IT FINALLY HAPPENED, IT WAS MY FAULT. DONNA TRUSTED ME AND I BETRAYED HER TRUST."


"I THOUGHT...I BELIEVED...THAT MARLOW'S ABILITIES WERE A GIFT. THAT IT WAS WRONG TO DENY HIM THE RIGHT TO USE THEM."

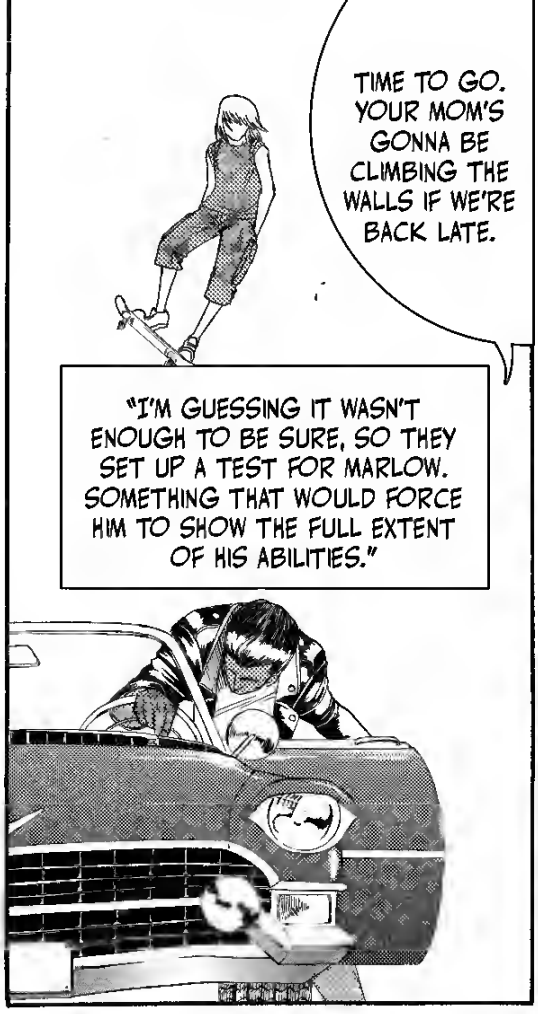

"SO I TOOK HIM SOMEWHERE I THOUGHT HE'D BE SAFE."

"...A PLACE WHERE HE COULD BE HIMSELF..."
"I SAW A FEW OF THE THINGS YOU CAN DO, SAM, BUT THAT WAS JUST A GLIMPSE."
"WITH MARLOW, I HAD THE CHANCE TO WATCH HIM GROW..."

CHAPTER 4: THE FALL

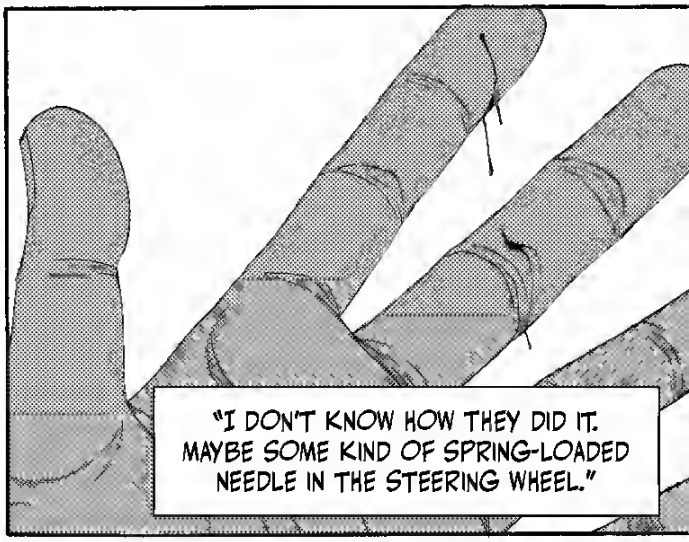
HOW WAS THAT?
NOT BAD, KID.
YOUR LANDING NEEDS SOME WORK.

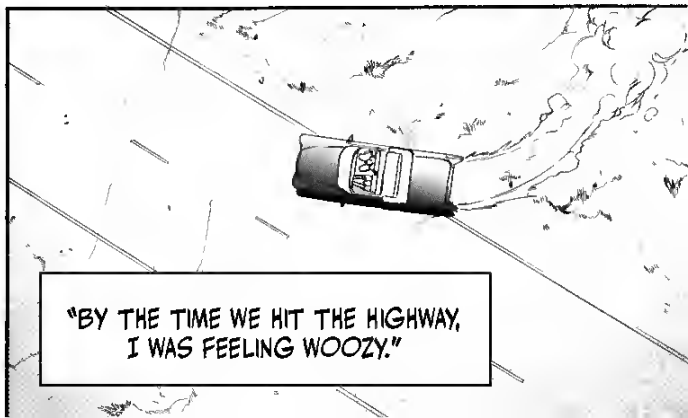
"LOOKING BACK, I REALIZE HOW NAIVE I WAS TO THINK WE WERE SAFE FROM PRYING EYES OUT THERE."
I WANT TO SEE YOU FOCUS, MARLOW.
I WANT EACH BOTTLE TAKEN DOWN SEPARATELY, ONE AFTER THE OTHER.
OKAY, PARDNER. NO PROBLEM.
"MAYBE THEY HAD CAMERAS HIDDEN OUT THERE, OR MAYBE THEY HAD SATELLITES TRAINED ON US FROM SPACE."
POW!
POW!
"I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH THEY SAW..."
KRAK
KRAK
KRAK
KRAK
"...BUT THEY SAW SOMETHING."


TIME TO GO. YOUR MOM'S GONNA BE CLIMBING THE WALLS IF WE'RE BACK LATE.
"I'M GUESSING IT WASN'T ENOUGH TO BE SURE, SO THEY SET UP A TEST FOR MARLOW. SOMETHING THAT WOULD FORCE HIM TO SHOW THE FULL EXTENT OF HIS ABILITIES."

AHH!
"AS I STARTED THE MOTOR, I FELT A SHARP PAIN IN MY HAND."

WHAT'S WRONG?
SOMETHING STUNG ME.


"I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY DID IT. MAYBE SOME KIND OF SPRING-LOADED NEEDLE IN THE STEERING WHEEL."


"BY THE TIME WE HIT THE HIGHWAY, I WAS FEELING WOOZY."

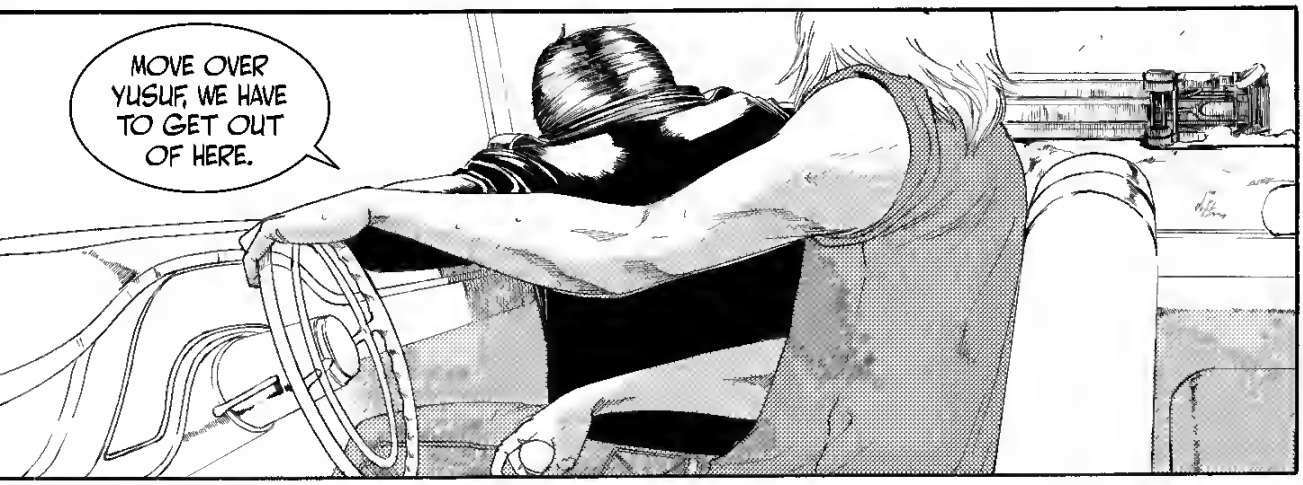
"I DIDN'T SEE THE SHREDDERS UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE."
YOU OKAY?
SHIT! I THINK I'M HAVING A REACTION TO THAT STING.
BAM
SKREEEE

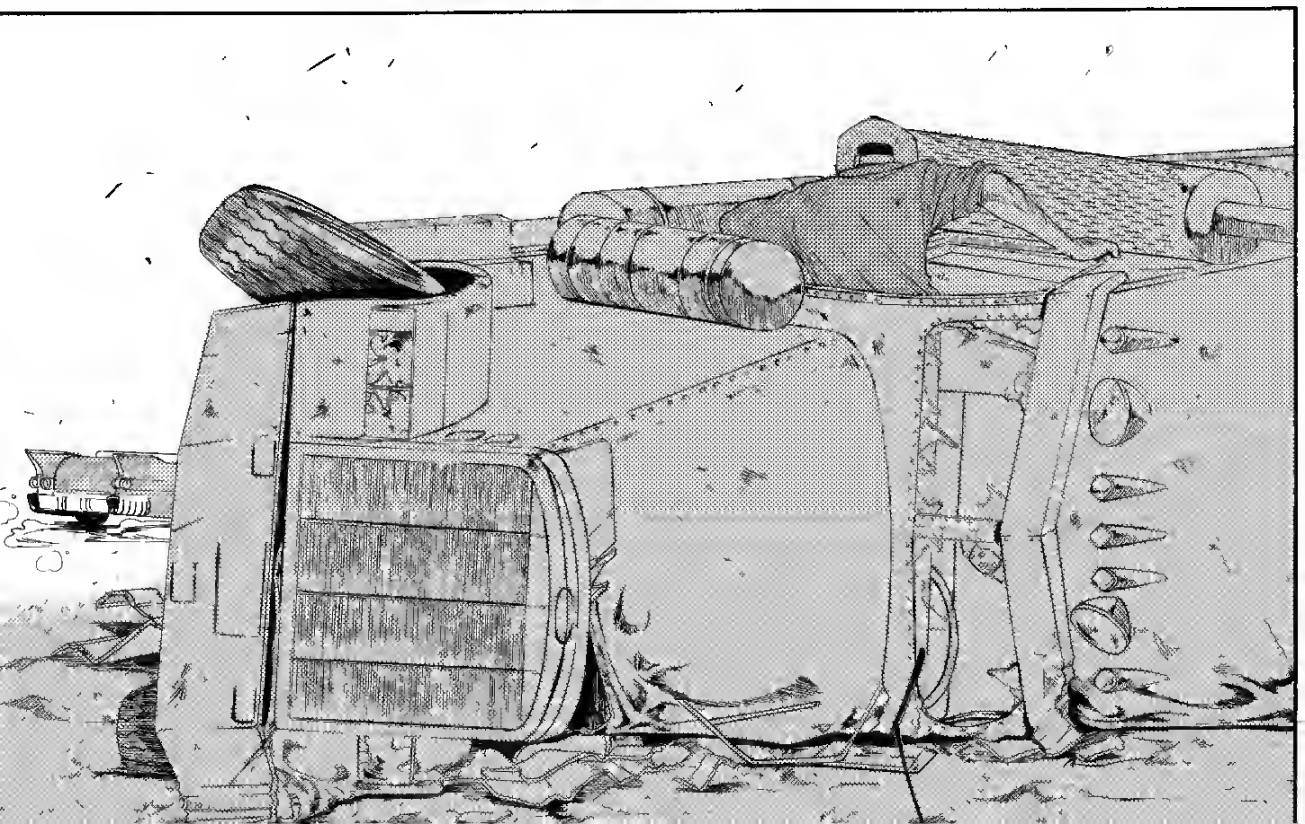
YUSUF?
NNNN...
YUSUF! THERE'S A TRUCK COMING!
NN-UNNH? S'OKAY-- WE'RE OFF THE ROAD.
"I DON'T KNOW IF HE SAW THE FUTURE OR READ THE DRIVER'S MIND. WHATEVER IT WAS, MARLOW KNEW..."
IT'S GOING TO HIT US!!

COME ON YUSUF! YOU HAVE TO GET OUT!

M-MARLOW... L-LEAVE ME... GET CLEAR!
"HE COULD HAVE RUN. HE COULD HAVE LET ME GET KILLED."
"I WISH TO GOD HE HAD."

WHOA, SHI-I-I-T!


MOVE OVER YUSUF, WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE.

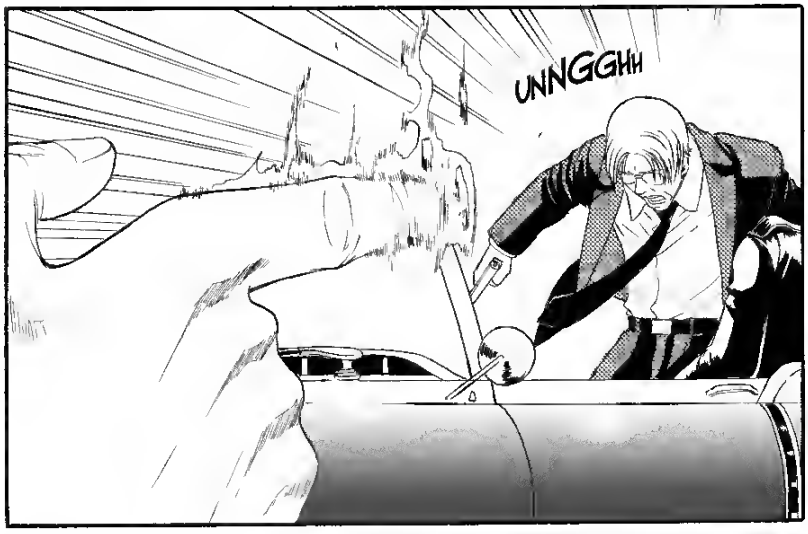


"IF IT WAS A TEST, MARLOW PASSED WITH FLYING COLORS."
"WE WERE NEVER GOING TO GET FAR. THE TYRES WERE BLOWN AND WE WERE HARDLY MOVING ABOVE WALKING PACE."
"WITH A FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD DRIVER AND ME ACTING LIKE I WAS STONED OUT OF MY HEAD, I WAS RESIGNED TO BEING PICKED UP BY THE COPS."
WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?
THAT GUY WAS TRYING TO KILL US.
"IT WASN'T THE HIGHWAY PATROL THAT GOT TO US FIRST."
WHO ARE THEY? COPS?
OH GOD, NO.
I THINK THEY'RE SHADES.

STEP OUT OF THE CAR, MARLOW.
THESE ARE THE GUYS WHO TRIED TO KILL YOUR MOM AND DAD.
NOT YOU! GET BACK IN THE VEHICLE!
WE JUST WANT TO TALK TO YOU, MARLOW.
DON'T GO WITH THEM, MARLOW.
YOU GO WITH THEM AND YOU'LL NEVER COME BACK.
WHAT DO I DO? THESE GUYS HAVE GUNS!
YOU FOCUS... LIKE WITH THE BOTTLES...

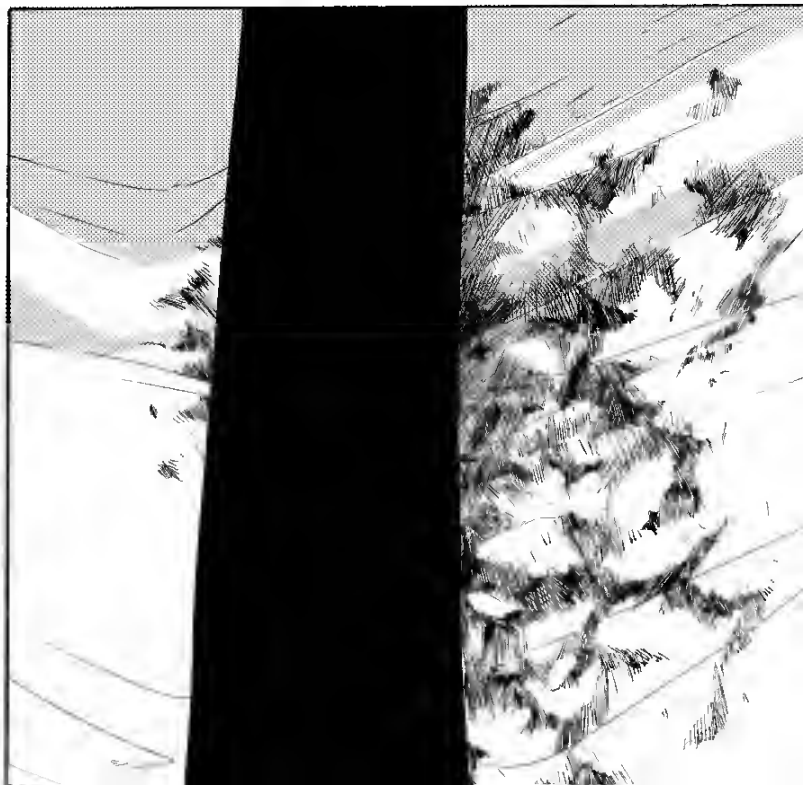
SHUT UP AND GET IN THE CAR, ASSHOLE!

LEAVE HIM ALONE...
...ASS-HOLE!


UNNGGHH

DAMN!
Akkk

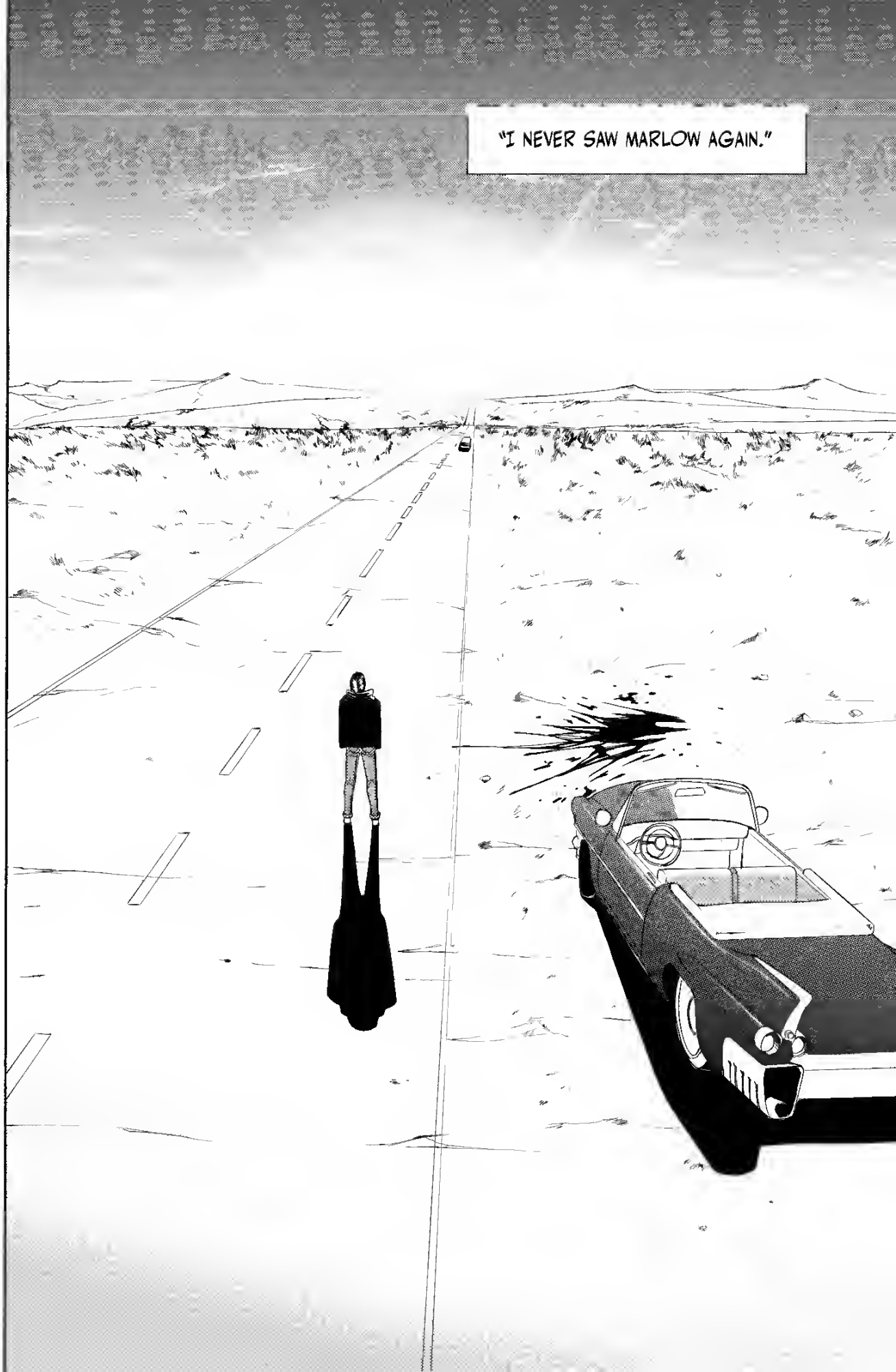
WHAT THE FUCK--?



YAAAAAAHH!
OHSHITOHSHITOHSH--
...

WHAT DID YOU DO TO HIM?
DO?
I BROKE HIS HEART.
I THINK YOU SHOULD LET US GO NOW.
I THINK YOU SHOULD TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.
THIS IS A LIVE FEED FROM YOUR HOME.
YOU'LL NOTICE YOUR MOTHER HAS VISITORS.

BUT YOU DON'T TOUCH MY MOM OR YUSUF.
NOT ONE HAIR...
OKAY, OKAY.
I'LL GO WITH YOU.
...OR I WILL MELT YOUR BRAIN.
TAKE CARE OF MOM, YUSUF.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.
I'LL BE BACK.


"I NEVER SAW MARLOW AGAIN."

YOU NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN?
ARE YOU SAYING MY SON'S DEAD TOO?
DON'T TELL ME THAT.
TRUTHFULLY, I DON'T KNOW. HE DISAPPEARED OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH...
...JUST LIKE YOU.
THIS IS ALL WRONG! IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE TWO YEARS!
WHAT DID RAVEN DO TO US?
WHY DID HE LEAVE US SO LONG?

CHAPTER 5: RUNNING ON EMPTY

SAM, I THINK...
CALM OOWN, SAM.
YOU'RE ALTERING THE MOLECULAR STRUCTURE OF THE BUILOING. THAT COULO BE OANGEROUS FOR NON-PARANORMALS IN THE VICINITY.
WHO IS *THAT?!*
IT'S OKAY. THAT'S OMNI. HE'S A KIND OF COMPUTER.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

RIGHT.
YOU'RE RIGHT. WHY SHOULD I BE BOTHERED BY VOICES IN MY HEAD?
THAT'S THE LEAST OF MY WORRIES RIGHT NOW.
DO YOU WANT TO TAKE A BREAK?
I DON'T KNOW.
I SHOULD HAVE DONE THIS DIFFERENTLY.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT OF YOU AS MORE MATURE THAN THE REST OF US.
TOTALLY COOL AND TOGETHER.
I FORGOT YOU'RE STILL JUST A KID...

I'LL COME BACK LATER.
NO.
LET'S DO THIS.
I KNOW THEY'RE ALL DEAD. MOM, DAD...
...DONNA...
NOTHING'S GOING TO CHANGE THAT.

WHAT DID DONNA DO WHEN SHE FOUND OUT THEY TOOK MARLOW?

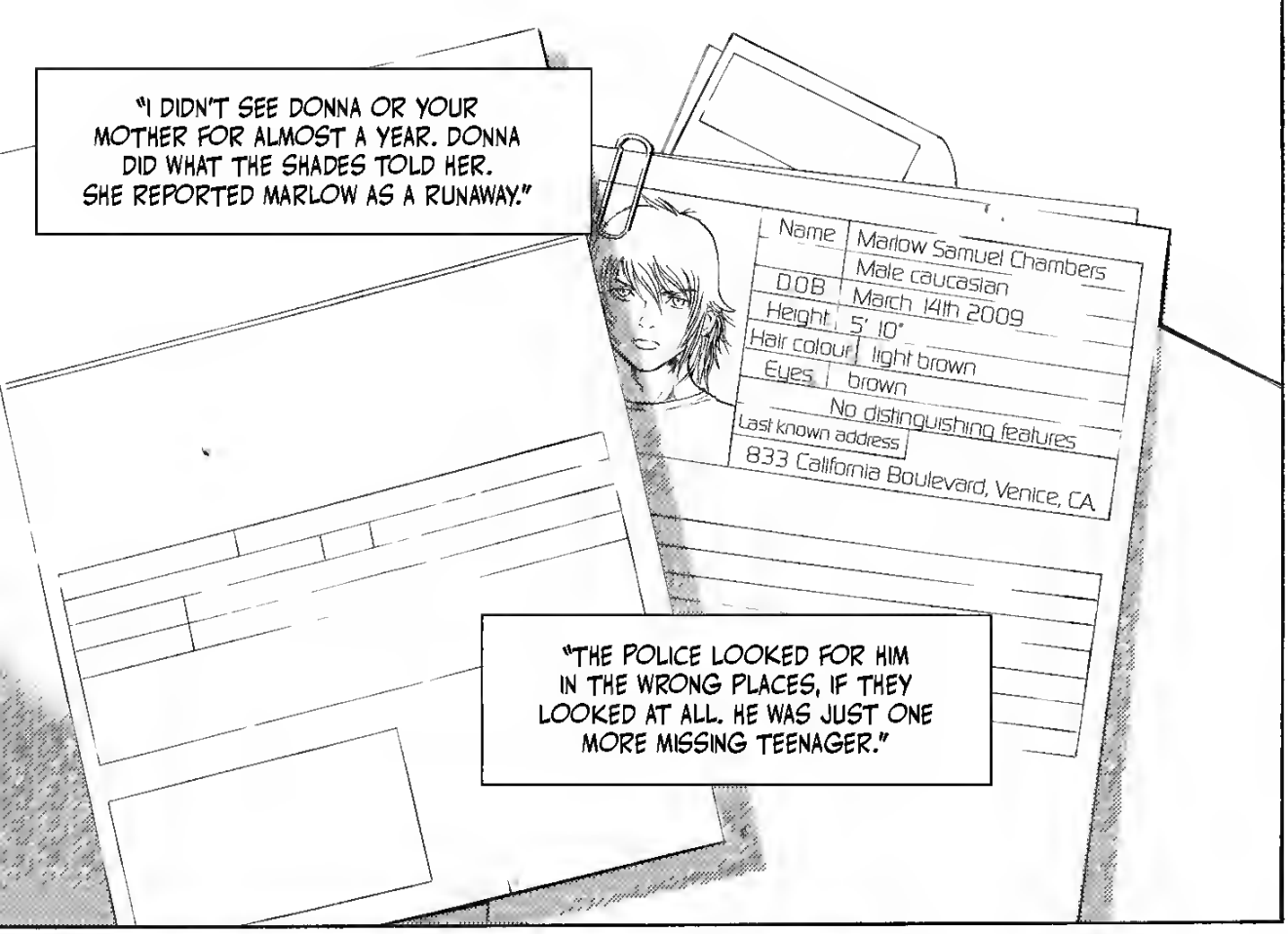
SHE HIT ME.

YOU BASTARD!
YOU STUPID, SELFISH, BASTARD!
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?!
DID YOU THINK THIS WAS ONE OF YOUR STUPID COMPUTER GAMES?
I TOLD YOU WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THEY FOUND OUT WHAT HE COULD DO.
MARLOW PROMISED ME HE WOULD NEVER USE HIS POWERS! YOU MADE HIM BREAK HIS PROMISE.
THIS IS YOUR FAULT, YUSUF.

I HAD TO DO IT. HE COULDN'T KEEP THAT INSIDE. IT'S...
...MY GOD, DONNA, IF YOU HAD SEEN WHAT HE COULD DO.

WELL, THANKS TO YOU, IT LOOKS LIKE I NEVER WILL.

WE'LL GO TO THE POLICE. WE'LL GO RIGHT NOW. WE'LL TELL THEM.
THEY CAN'T JUST TAKE SOMEONE AWAY LIKE THAT--
--THEY CAN DO ANYTHING THEY WANT.
AND IF WE GO TO THE POLICE, OR THE MEDIA, IF WE BREATHE ONE WORD, THEY'LL KILL MARLOW.
--JUST GO, YUSUF.
THEY TOLD ME THAT AND I BELIEVE THEM.
DONNA--
GO.


"I DIDN'T SEE DONNA OR YOUR MOTHER FOR ALMOST A YEAR. DONNA DID WHAT THE SHADES TOLD HER. SHE REPORTED MARLOW AS A RUNAWAY."
Name
Marlow Samuel Chambers
Male caucasian
DOB
March 14th 2009
Height
5' 10"
Hair colour
light brown
Eyes
brown
No distinguishing features
Last known address
833 California Boulevard, Venice, CA
"THE POLICE LOOKED FOR HIM IN THE WRONG PLACES, IF THEY LOOKED AT ALL. HE WAS JUST ONE MORE MISSING TEENAGER."

"EVEN THERE SHE SPOKE IN WHISPERS."
CAROLYNE, WHAT'S THIS ABOUT? WHY COULDN'T WE JUST MEET AT MY PLACE?
IT'S PROBABLY BUGGED.
"THEN, OUT OF THE BLUE, YOUR MOTHER CONTACTED ME. SHE INSISTED WE DRIVE TO A BAR WHERE NEITHER OF US WOULD BE RECOGNIZED."

YOU'RE KIDDING.
I THINK I'M IN TROUBLE.

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
MY SON AND MY GRANDSON ARE BOTH MISSING, ONE OR BOTH OF THEM IS BEING HELD BY SOME KIND OF COVERT GOVERNMENT AGENCY.
I DID WHAT ANYONE WOULD DO.
I SEARCHED THE INTERNET. I LOOKED FOR ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE SKAR VIRUS. I LOOKED UP SHADES, BLACK OPS, PARANORMAL POWERS, CONSPIRACY THEORIES.
DID YOU FIND ANYTHING?
I THOUGHT I COVERED MY TRACKS. I NEVER USED OUR COMPUTERS. I WENT TO INTERNET CAFES, LIBRARIES. I NEVER USED THE SAME PLACE TWICE.
I-I...
CAROLYNE, DID YOU *FIND* ANYTHING?!
YES.

"I DROVE MILES TO GET TO AN INTERNET CAFE I'D NEVER BEEN TO BEFORE. I LOGGED ONTO A NEW SITE. AT FIRST IT WAS JUST THE USUAL NONSENSE. ALIEN ABDUCTIONS, KENNEDY'S ASSASSINATION, FAKE MOON LANDINGS, BUT EVENTUALLY I STUMBLED ON A MESSAGE BOARD WHERE THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT THE SKAR VICTIMS."

"THERE WERE DISAPPEARANCES THAT HAD BEEN HUSHED UP AND THESE PEOPLE WERE SAYING THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD KIDNAPPED THEM, BECAUSE THEY HAD PARANORMAL POWERS."

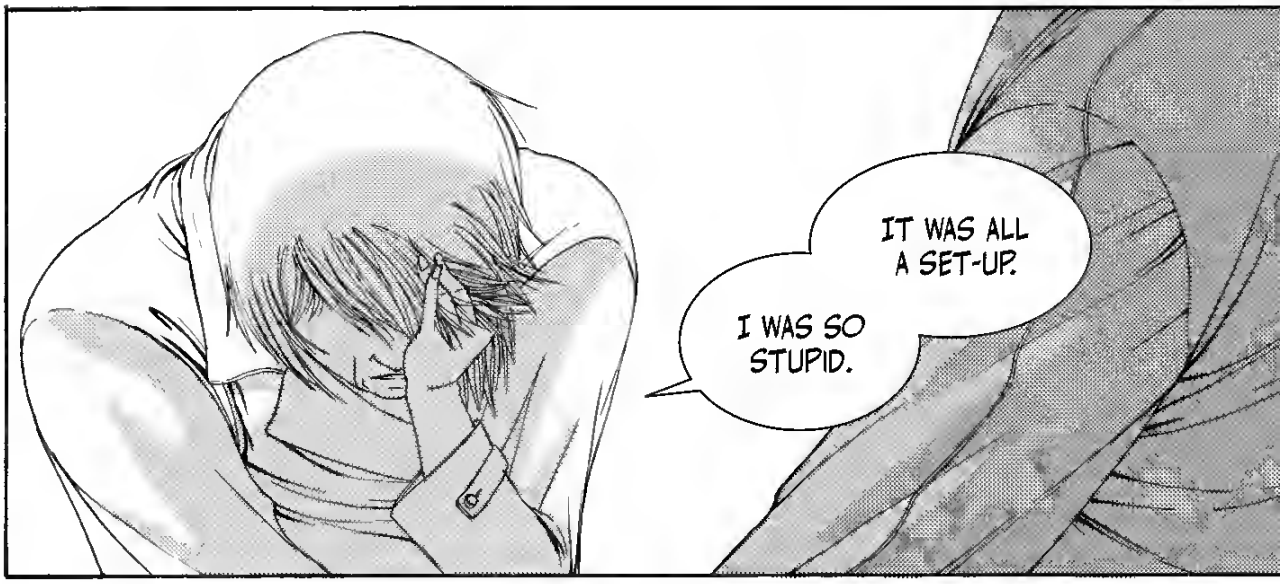
"THEN THIS PERSON CAME ONLINE WHO SAID HIS BROTHER HAD BEEN TAKEN BACK IN 2008."

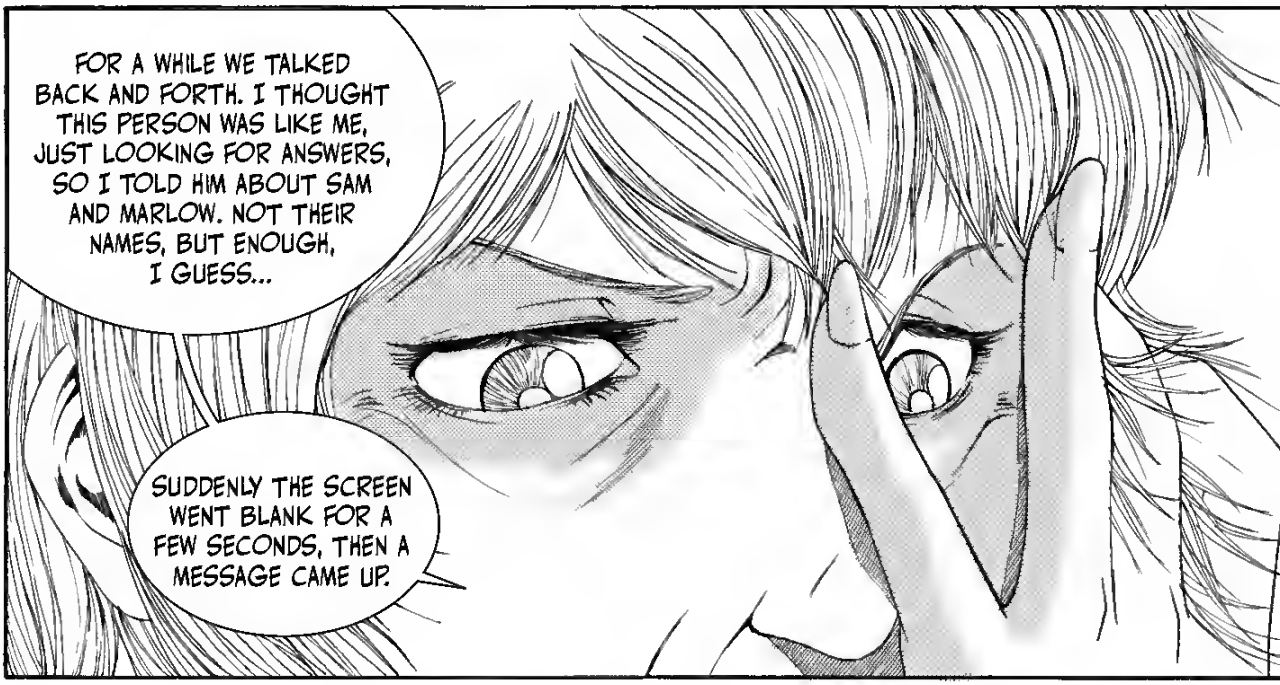
I THOUGHT I WAS FINALLY GETTING SOMEWHERE, SO I RESPONDED."

WHITE RABBIT: I lost someone too. He had the virus. He was sick but he could do the kind of things you're talking about. Things you would call paranormal.

You are signed in as WHITE RABBIT

send



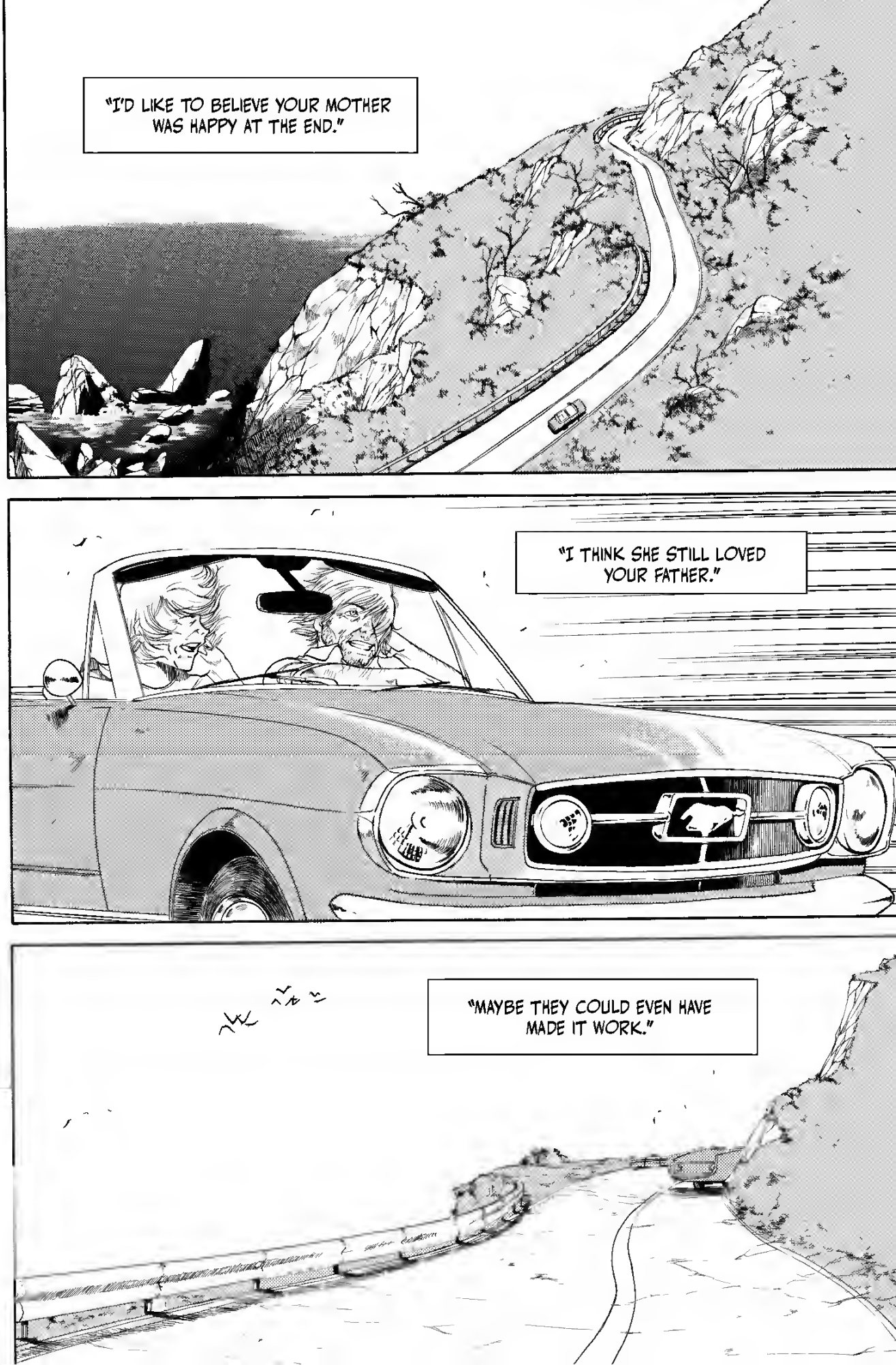

FOR A WHILE WE TALKED BACK AND FORTH. I THOUGHT THIS PERSON WAS LIKE ME, JUST LOOKING FOR ANSWERS, SO I TOLD HIM ABOUT SAM AND MARLOW. NOT THEIR NAMES, BUT ENOUGH, I GUESS...
SUDDENLY THE SCREEN WENT BLANK FOR A FEW SECONDS, THEN A MESSAGE CAME UP.

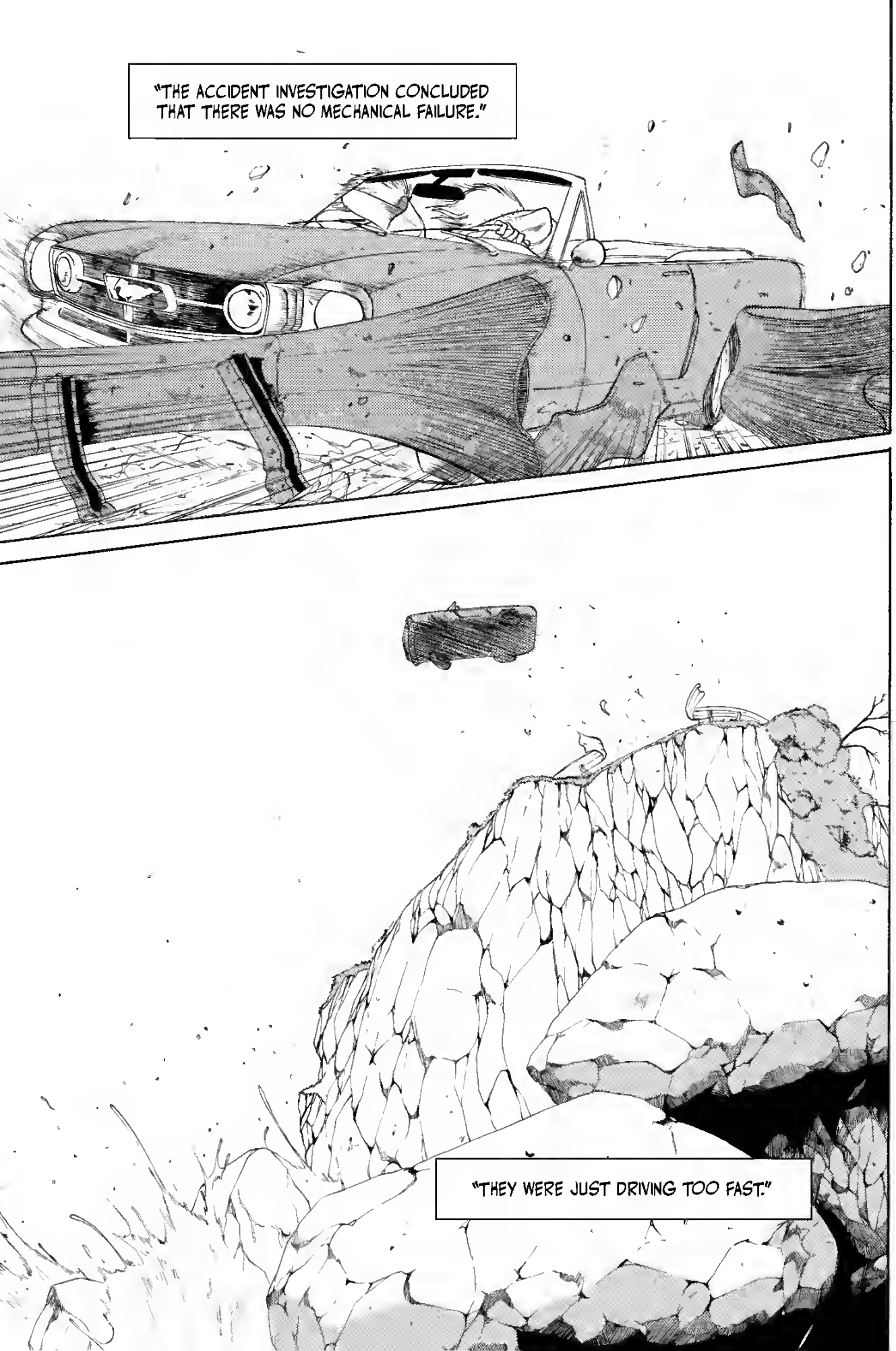
NAUGHTY, NAUGHTY, MRS CHANCE.

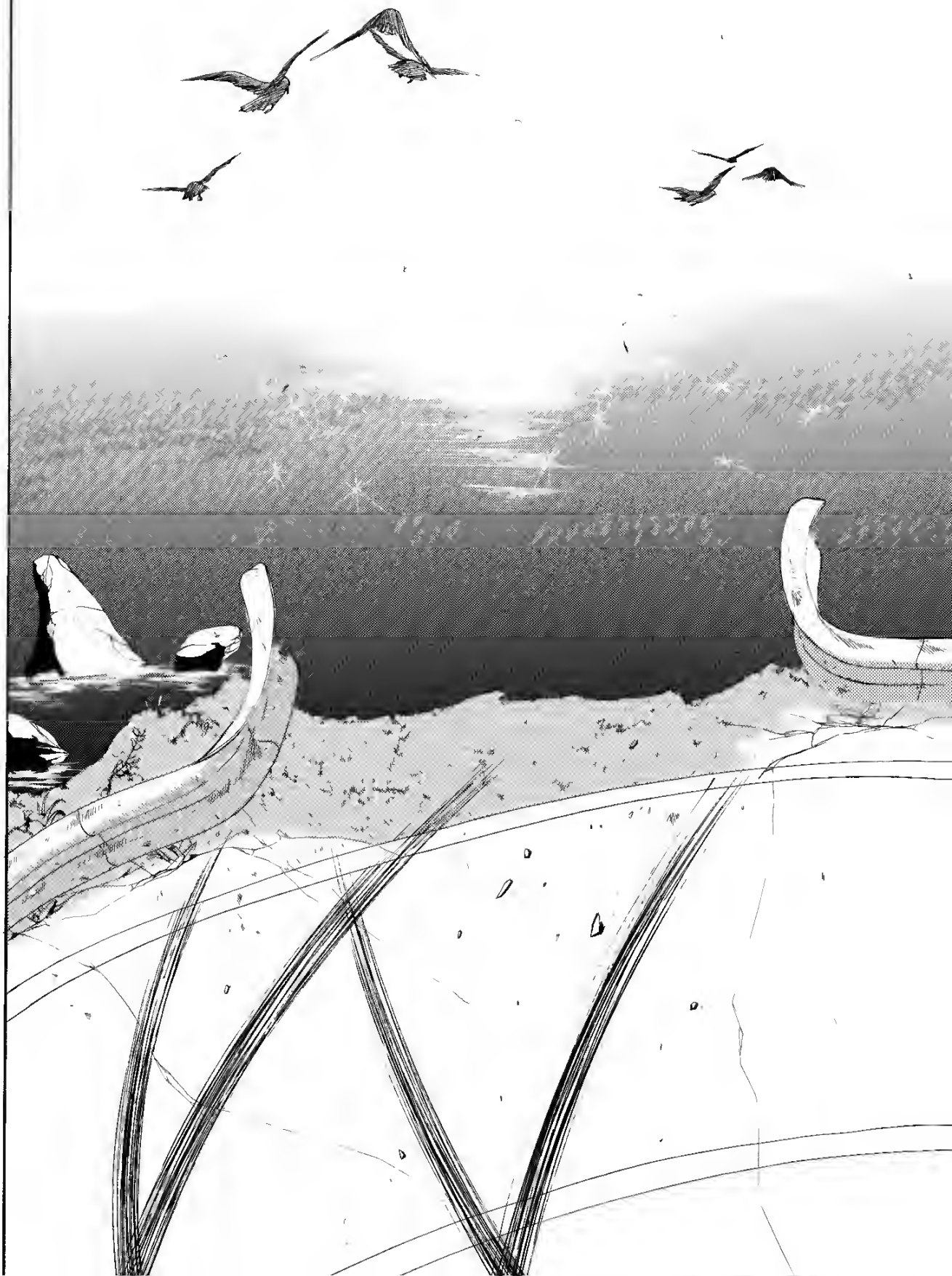
DAMN, THAT'S NOT GOOD.
WHAT HAPPENED THEN?
NOTHING. I LOGGED OFF AND WENT HOME.
THEY MUST HAVE BEEN WATCHING ME THE WHOLE TIME. THEY SET UP THAT MESSAGE BOARD TO TRAP ME.
THEY WERE WARNING YOU OFF. THAT'S ALL.
I'M GETTING OUT. DONNA WILL BE SAFER WITH ME GONE.
THAT'S CRAZY. WHERE WILL YOU GO?
MY EX-HUSBAND, SAM'S DAD, CAME BY. I'M GOING AWAY WITH HIM. HE'S GOING ON A ROAD TRIP AND HE'S INVITED ME ALONG.
I'M LEAVING WITH HIM TOMORROW.

I WANT YOU TO PROMISE ME YOU'LL LOOK AFTER DONNA WHILE I'M GONE.
DONNA MADE IT VERY CLEAR SHE DOESN'T WANT TO SEE ME.
THINGS CHANGE.
SHE'S USING DRUGS.
COCAINE. HEROIN.
CHRIST! COULDN'T YOU STOP HER?
NO.
I SCREWED UP THERE TOO.
I'LL SEE YOU AROUND.

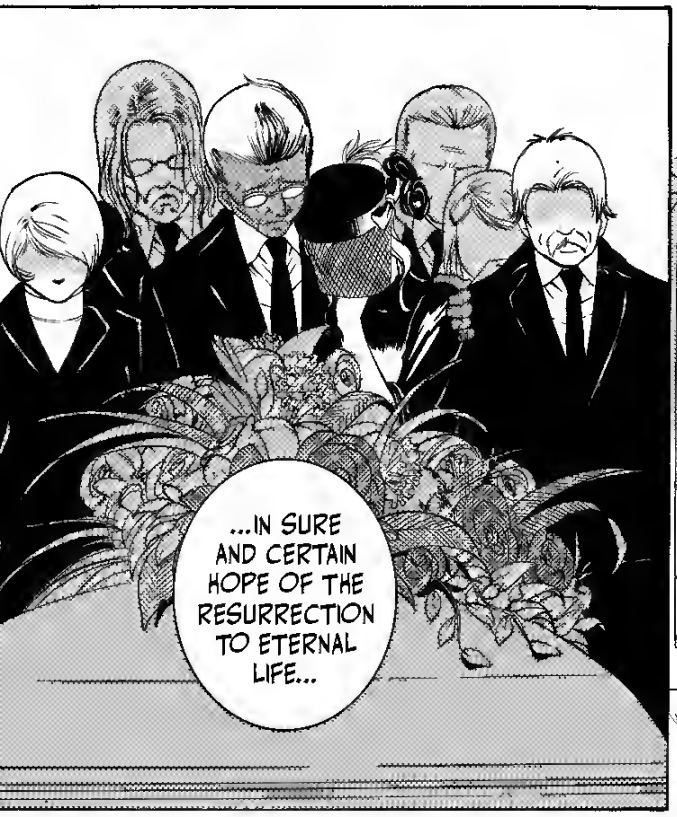
YOU REMEMBER WHAT I SAID.
YOU TAKE CARE OF HER, OR I'LL BE COMING AFTER YOU.
"AND JUST LIKE THAT, ONE MORE PERSON DISAPPEARED OUT OF MY LIFE..."

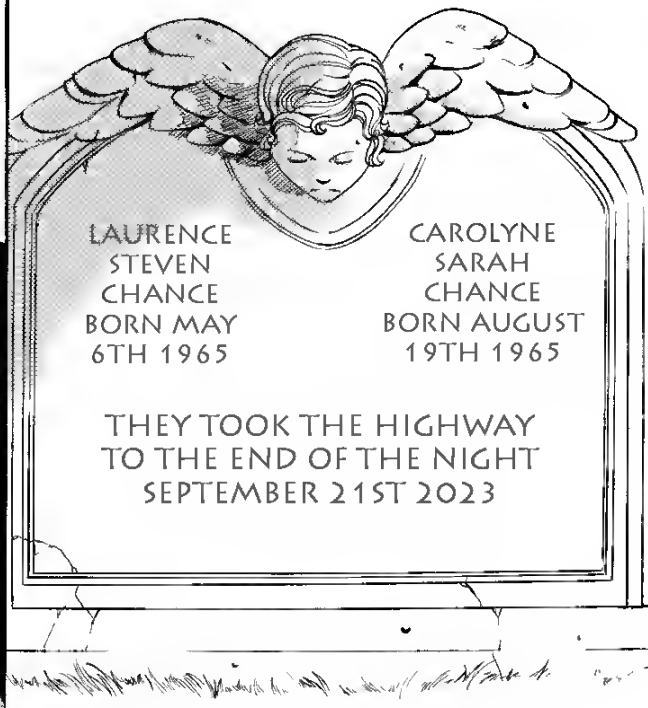

"I'D LIKE TO BELIEVE YOUR MOTHER WAS HAPPY AT THE END."
"I THINK SHE STILL LOVED YOUR FATHER."
"MAYBE THEY COULD EVEN HAVE MADE IT WORK."


"THE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION CONCLUDED THAT THERE WAS NO MECHANICAL FAILURE."
"THEY WERE JUST DRIVING TOO FAST."



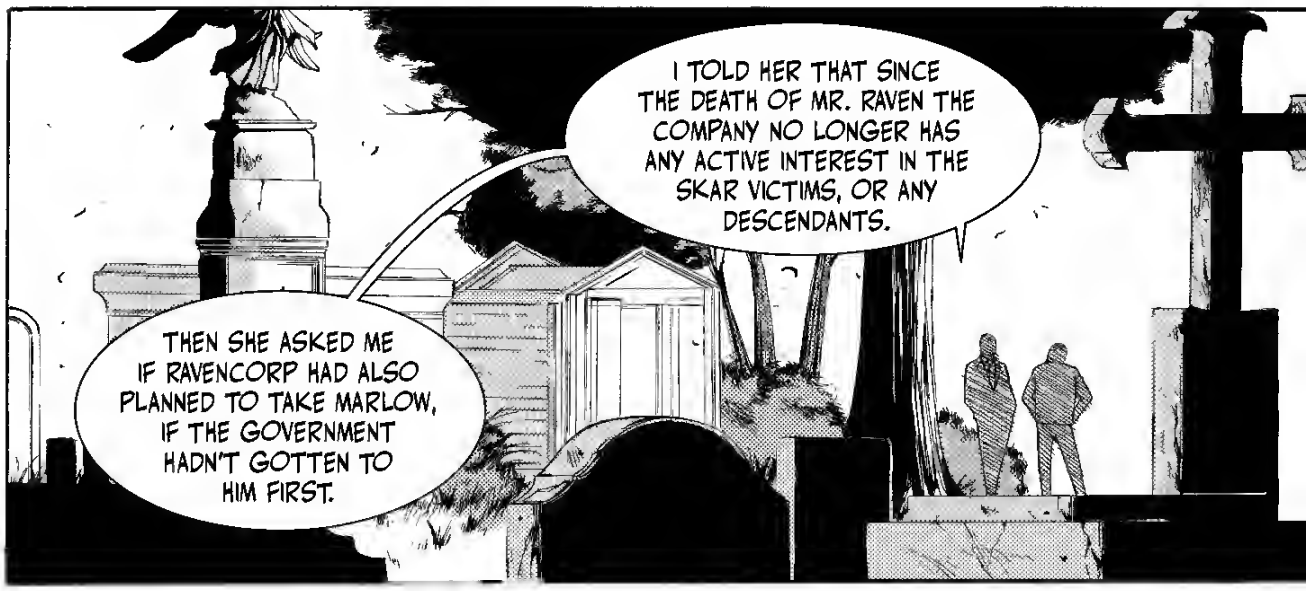
CHAPTER 6: THE ROAD TO YOU

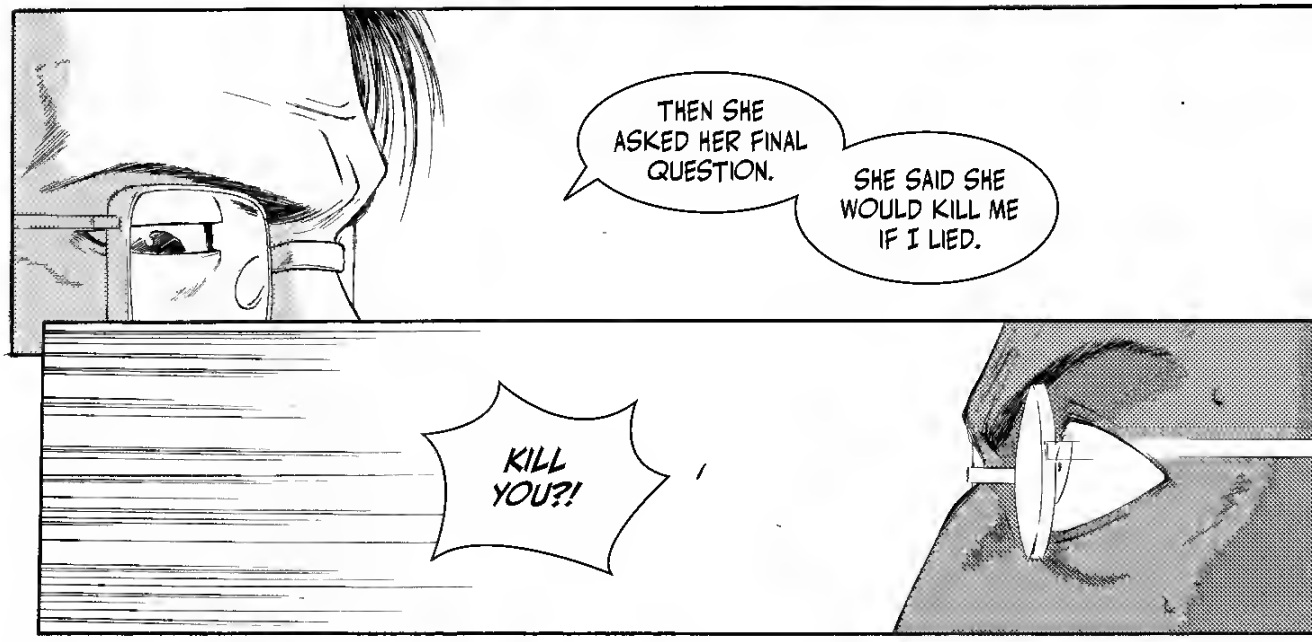


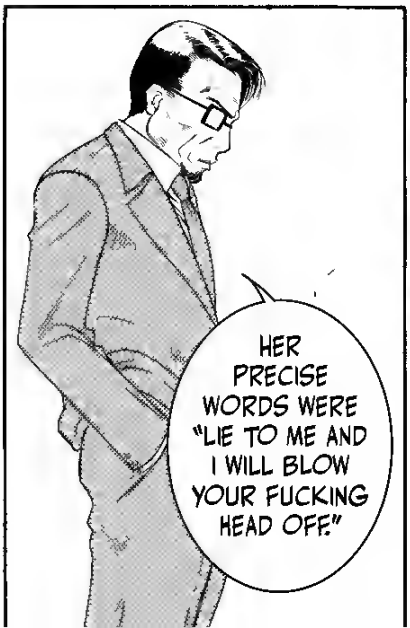

LAURENCE STEVEN CHANCE BORN MAY 6TH 1965
CAROLYNE SARAH CHANCE BORN AUGUST 19TH 1965
THEY TOOK THE HIGHWAY TO THE END OF THE NIGHT
SEPTEMBER 21ST 2023

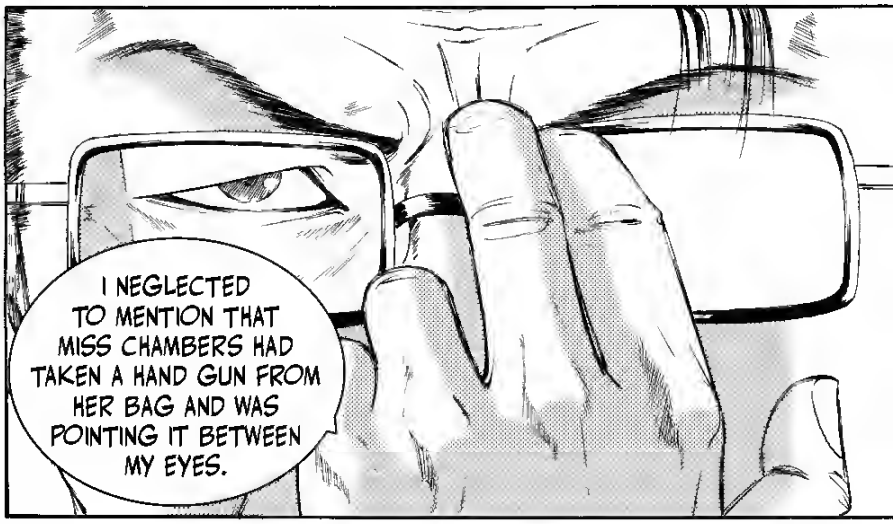
MR HURAIRA, THERE'S SOMEONE WHO WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK TO YOU.
IN PRIVATE.
MY GOD! CAN'T YOU PEOPLE STAY AWAY FROM US?
YOU THINK WE HAVEN'T GOT THE MESSAGE YET?
MY EMPLOYER REPRESENTS RAVENCORP, NOT THE GOVERNMENT. HE HAS A FLIGHT TO EUROPE IN THREE HOURS AND MAY NOT BE RETURNING FOR SOME TIME.
SO IF YOU WOULD FOLLOW ME...
RAVENCORP?
JESUS! AFTER ALL THESE YEARS YOU GUYS APPEAR AT A FUNERAL?
WHAT DOES YOUR BOSS WANT WITH ME?
YOU SHOULD ASK HIM YOURSELF. HIS NAME IS MISTER KOBAYASHI.

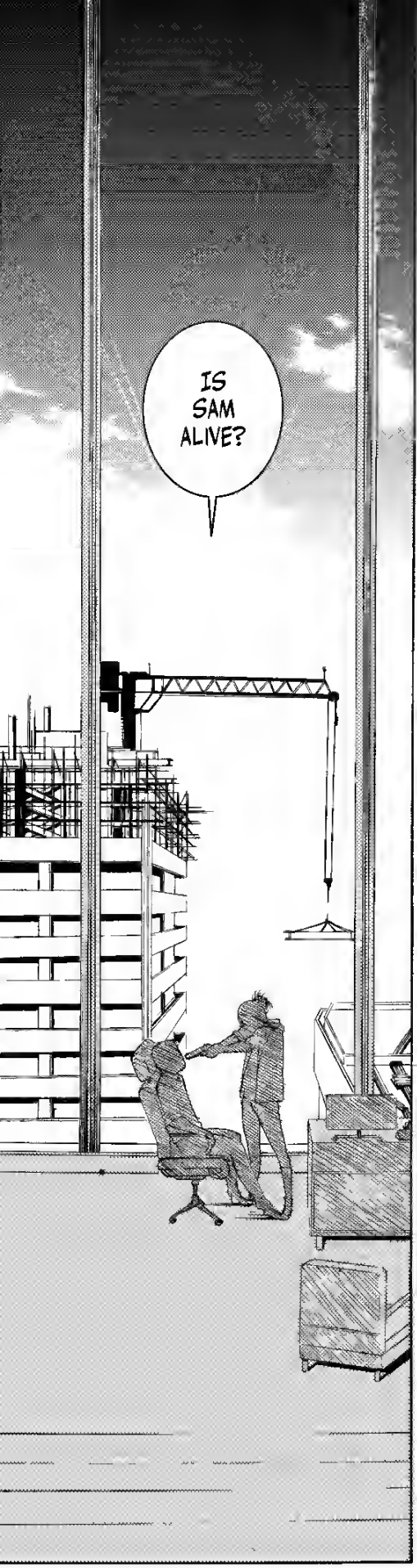
MISTER HURAIRA. I APOLOGISE FOR INTRUDING ON SUCH A SORROWFUL OCCASION.
I HAVE TO TAKE A FRIEND HOME, SO--
MISS CHAMBERS. YES. YOUR FRIEND IS THE REASON I AM HERE.
SHE CAME TO SEE ME TWO DAYS AGO.
DONNA WENT TO RAVENCORP?
SHE ASKED ME A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS. FIRSTLY, WHETHER I, OR ANYONE AT RAVENCORP, HAS ANY KNOWLEDGE OF THE WHEREABOUTS OF HER SON, MARLOW.
I TOLD HER THAT WE KNOW HER SON IS IN THE CUSTODY OF THE COVERT AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AGENCY YOU KNOW AS THE SHADES.
BUT I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE THEY ARE KEEPING HIM.
I TOLD HER THAT I BELIEVE SHE WILL NEVER SEE HER SON AGAIN.

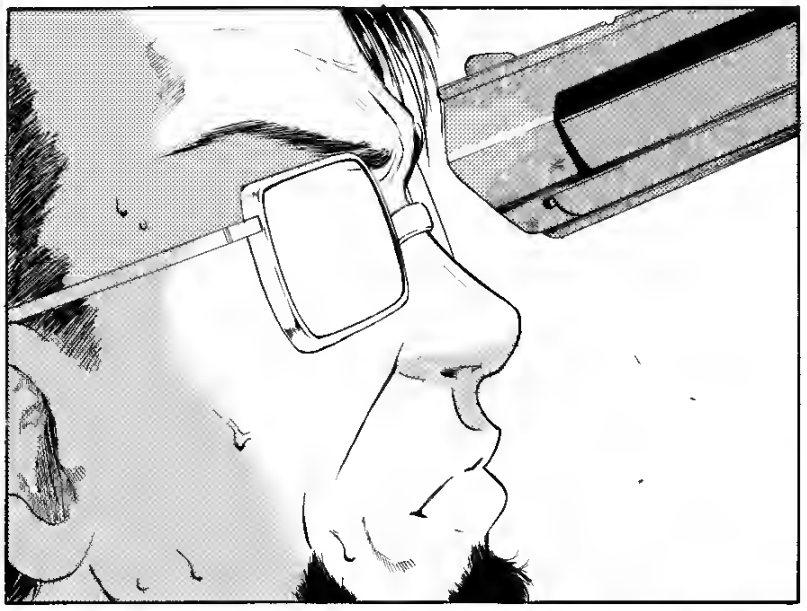

I TOLD HER THAT SINCE THE DEATH OF MR. RAVEN THE COMPANY NO LONGER HAS ANY ACTIVE INTEREST IN THE SKAR VICTIMS, OR ANY DESCENDANTS.
THEN SHE ASKED ME IF RAVENCORP HAD ALSO PLANNED TO TAKE MARLOW, IF THE GOVERNMENT HADN'T GOTTEN TO HIM FIRST.

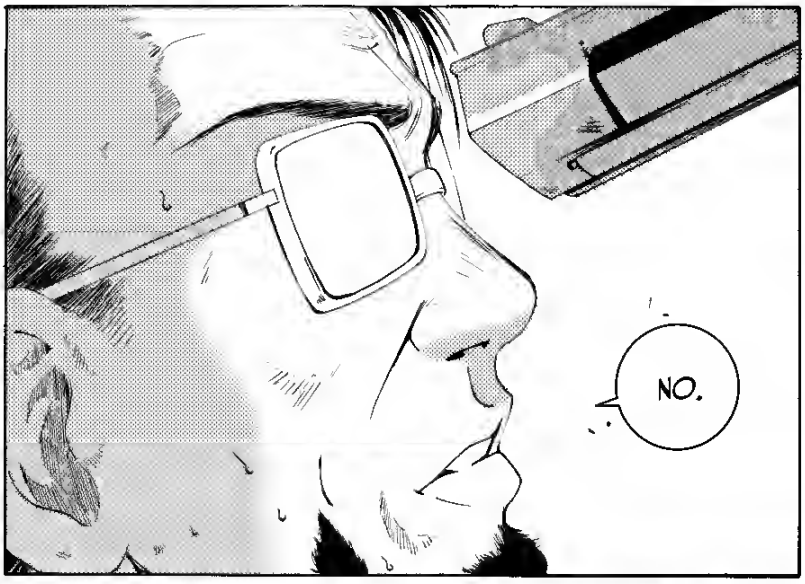

THEN SHE ASKED HER FINAL QUESTION.
SHE SAID SHE WOULD KILL ME IF I LIED.
KILL YOU?!

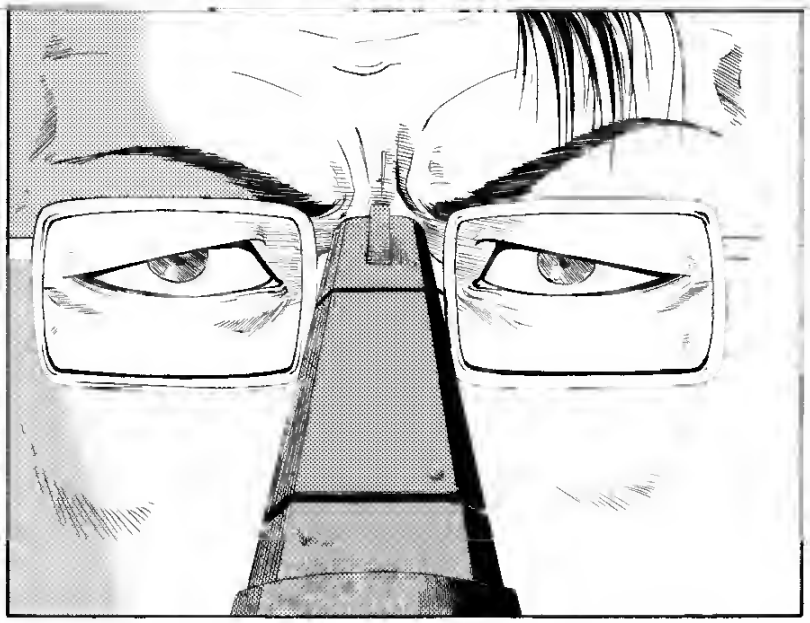

HER PRECISE WORDS WERE "LIE TO ME AND I WILL BLOW YOUR FUCKING HEAD OFF."

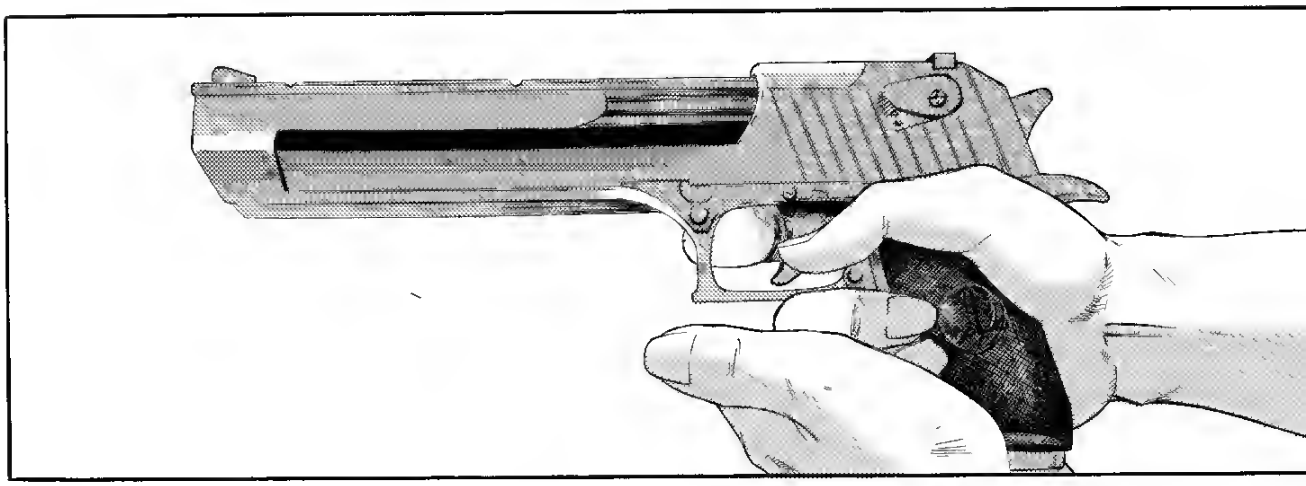

I NEGLECTED TO MENTION THAT MISS CHAMBERS HAD TAKEN A HAND GUN FROM HER BAG AND WAS POINTING IT BETWEEN MY EYES.

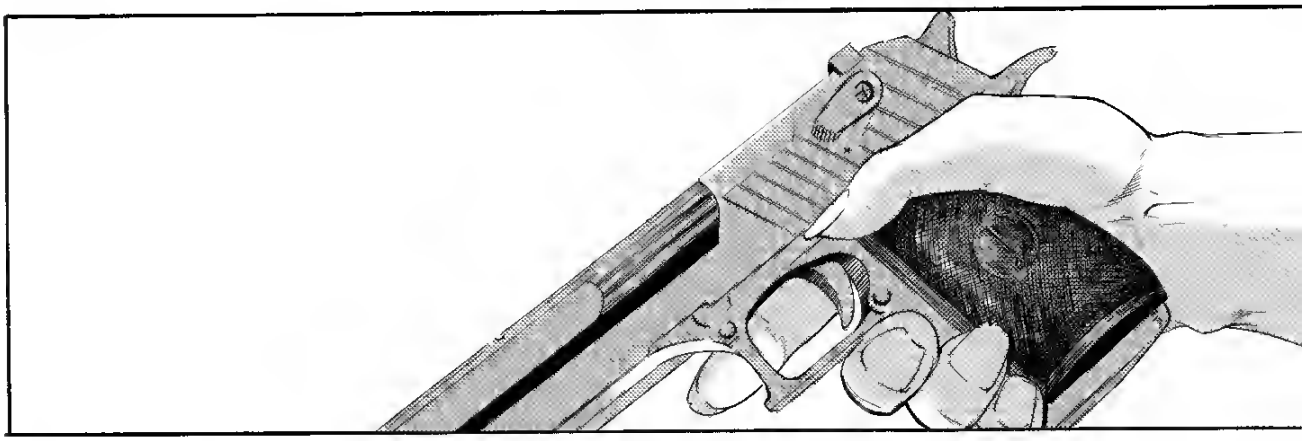

IS SAM ALIVE?

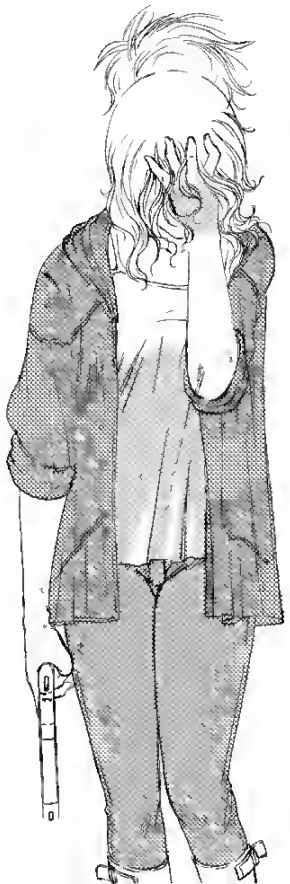


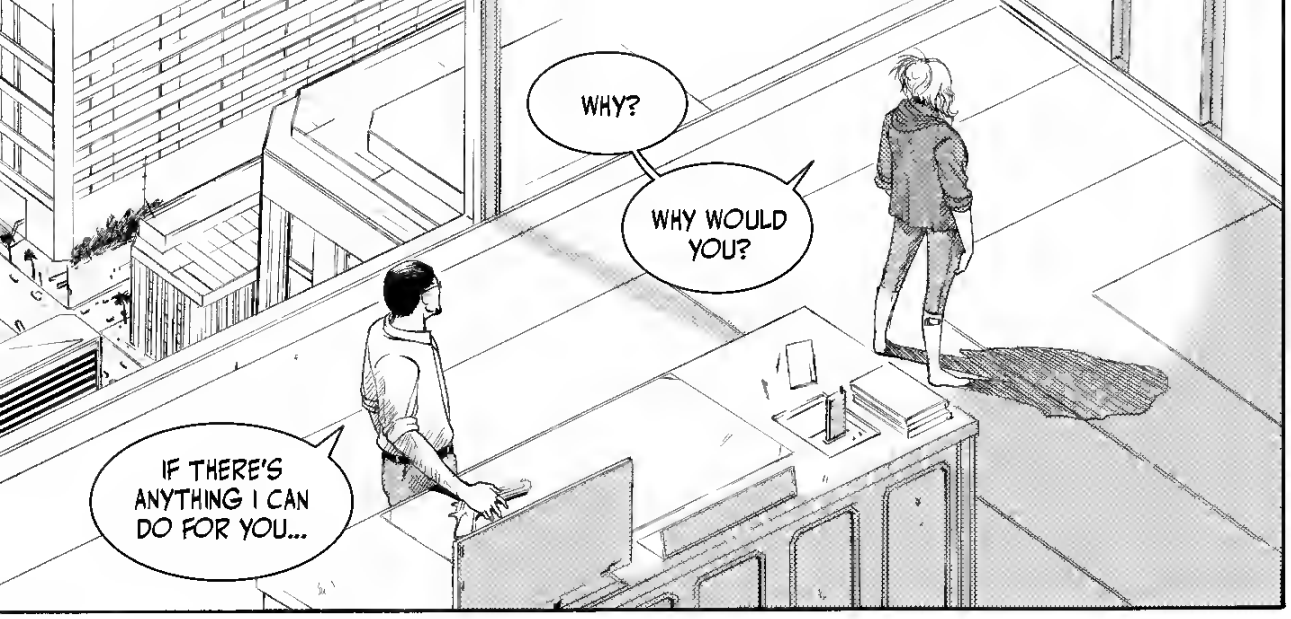

NO.

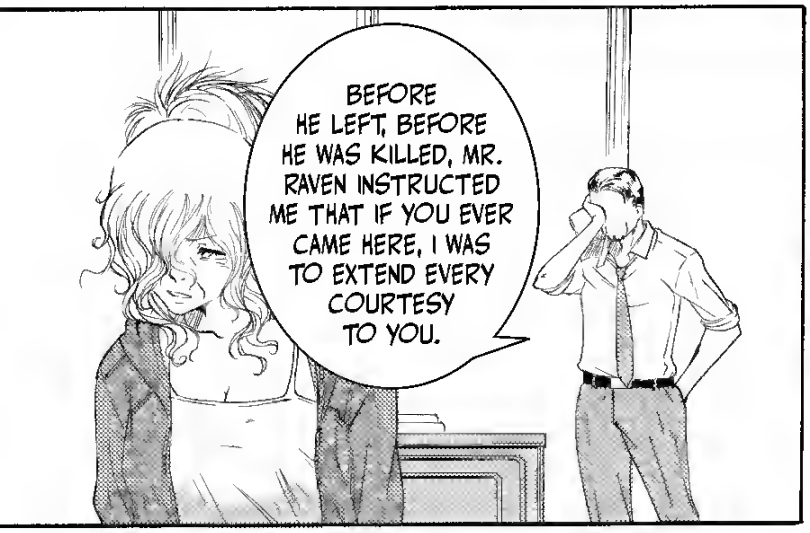


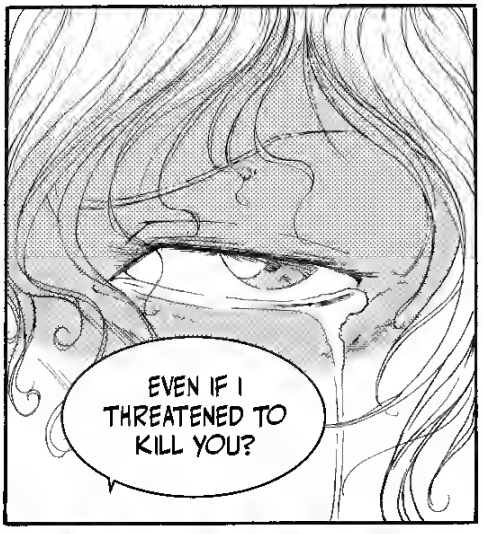


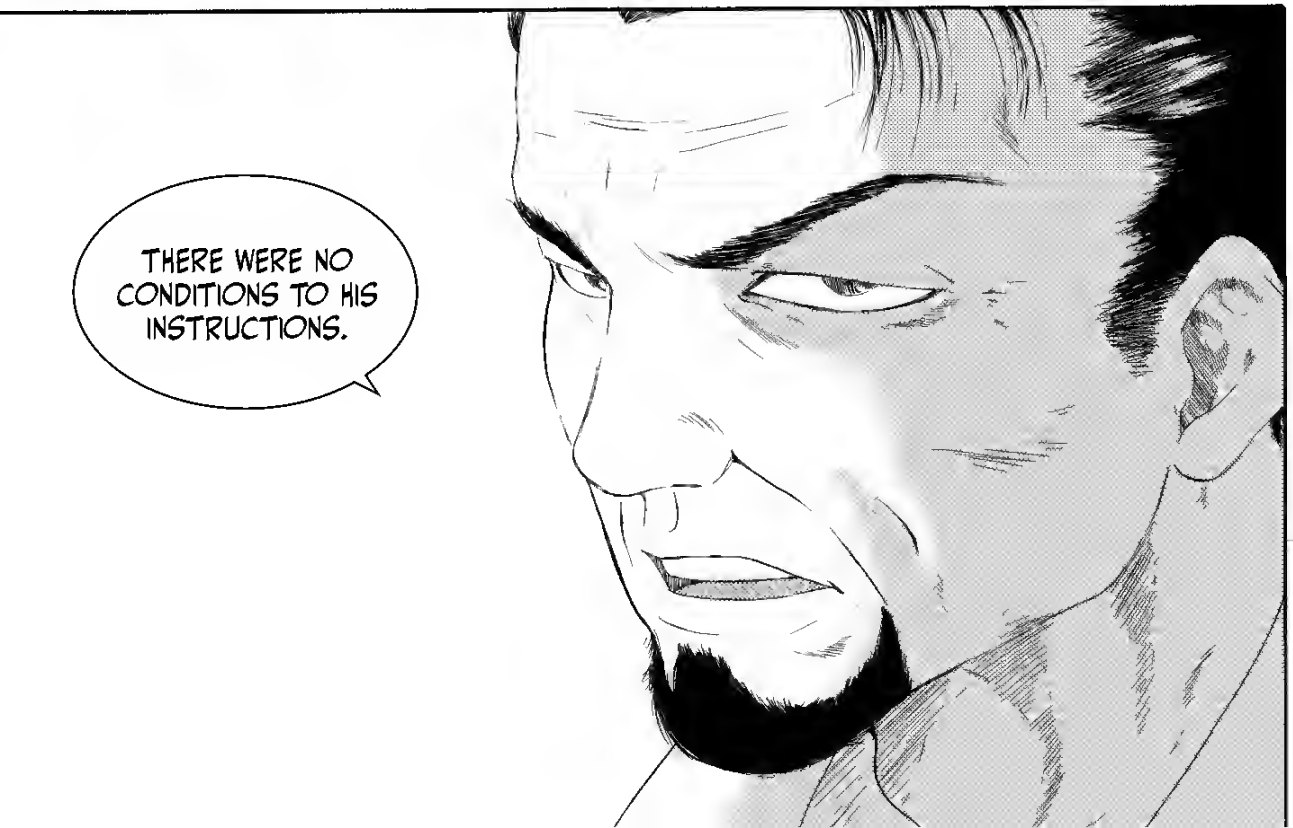





WHY?
WHY WOULD YOU?
IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU...


BEFORE HE LEFT, BEFORE HE WAS KILLED, MR. RAVEN INSTRUCTED ME THAT IF YOU EVER CAME HERE, I WAS TO EXTEND EVERY COURTESY TO YOU.

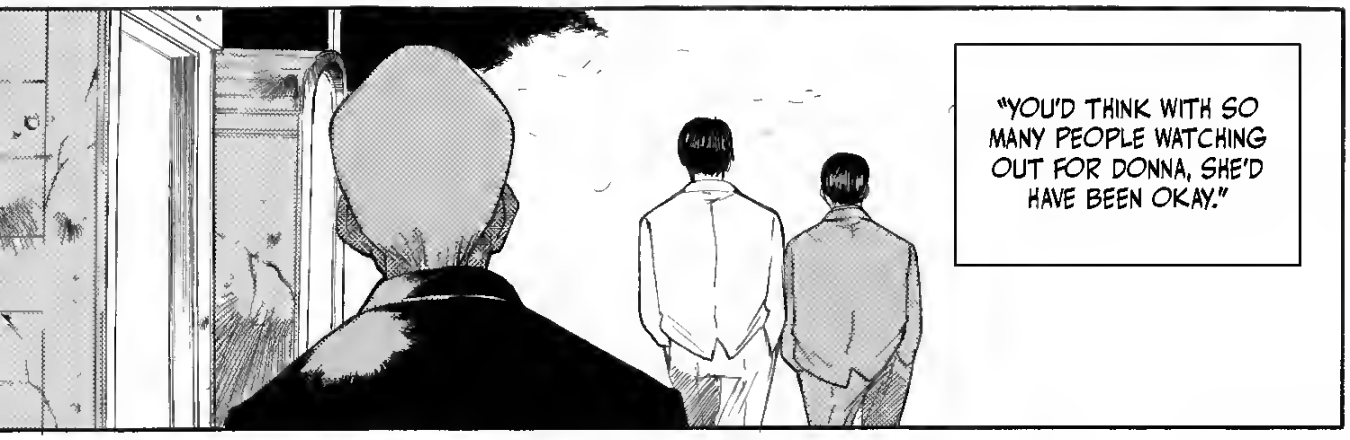

EVEN IF I THREATENED TO KILL YOU?

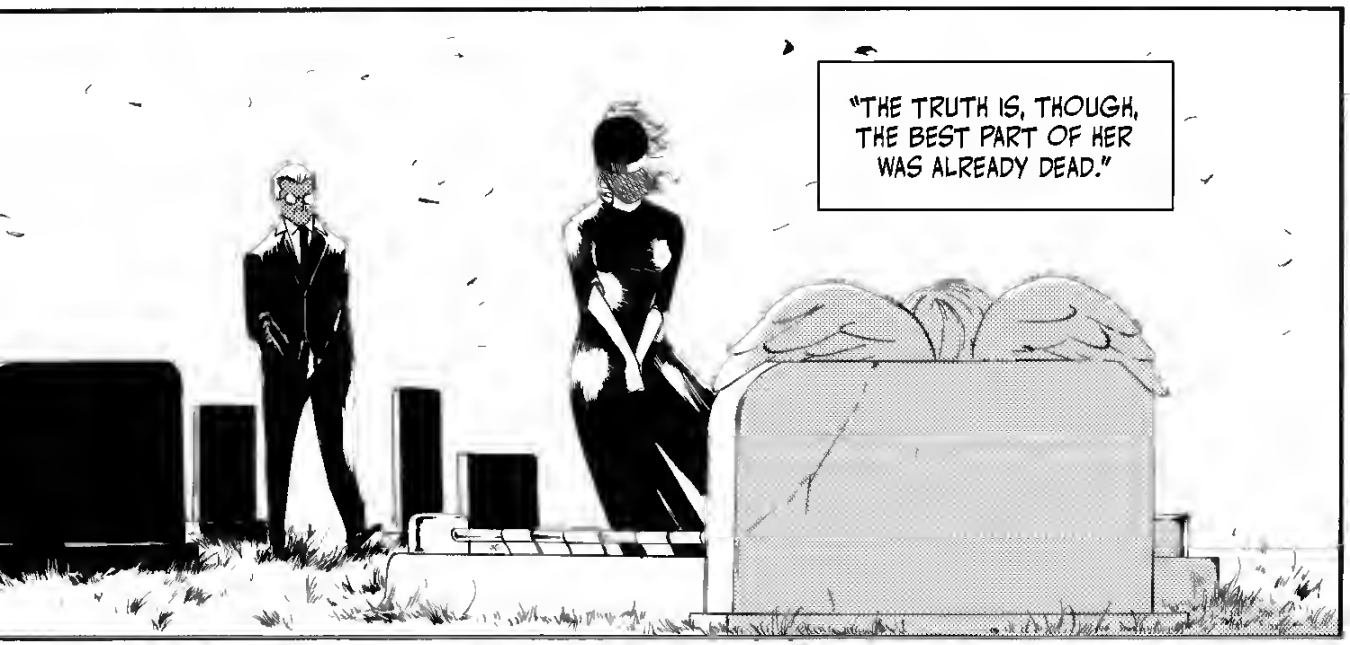

THERE WERE NO CONDITIONS TO HIS INSTRUCTIONS.

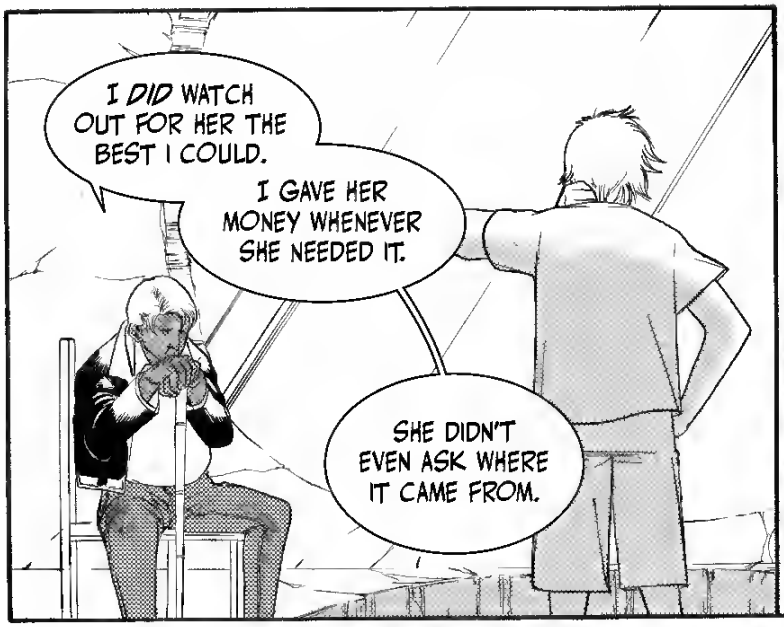
THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO FOR ME.
HERE.
KEEP IT.
I MIGHT DO SOMETHING STUPID WITH IT.

SHE WON'T ACCEPT HELP FROM RAVENCORP DIRECTLY, SO I'VE ARRANGED TO HAVE MONTHLY DEPOSITS MADE INTO YOUR BANK ACCOUNT.
ANYTHING SHE NEEDS...

YEAH.
THANKS.

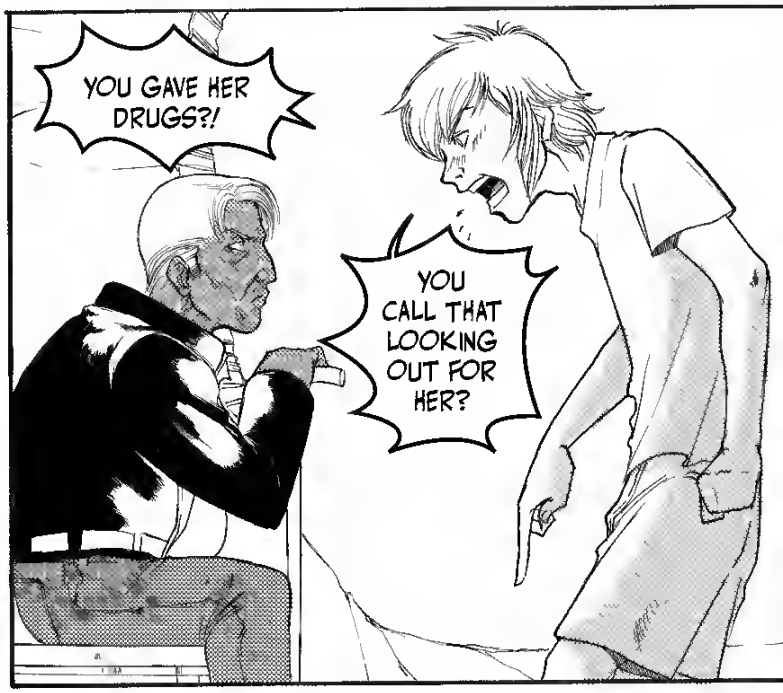

"YOU'D THINK WITH SO MANY PEOPLE WATCHING OUT FOR DONNA, SHE'D HAVE BEEN OKAY."

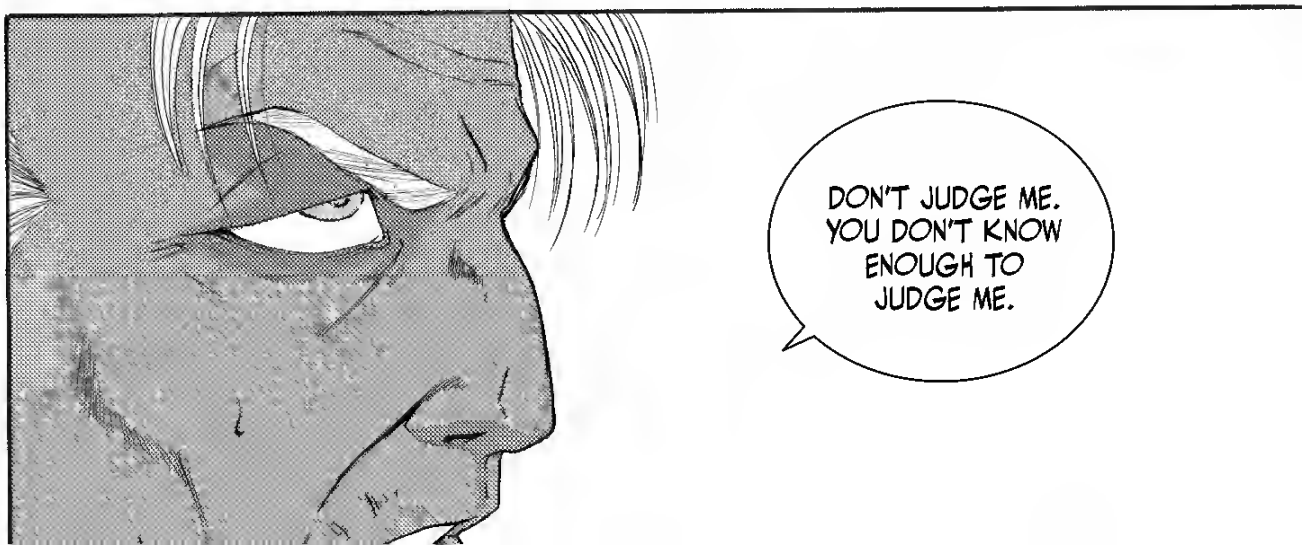

"THE TRUTH IS, THOUGH, THE BEST PART OF HER WAS ALREADY DEAD."


I *DID* WATCH OUT FOR HER THE BEST I COULD.
I GAVE HER MONEY WHENEVER SHE NEEDED IT.
SHE DIDN'T EVEN ASK WHERE IT CAME FROM.

MOST OF IT WENT ON DRUGS.
WHAT COULD I DO? I COULDN'T STOP HER.

OKAY, I BOUGHT THE DRUGS FOR HER.
I DIDN'T WANT HER GOING NEAR THOSE SCUMBAG DEALERS.

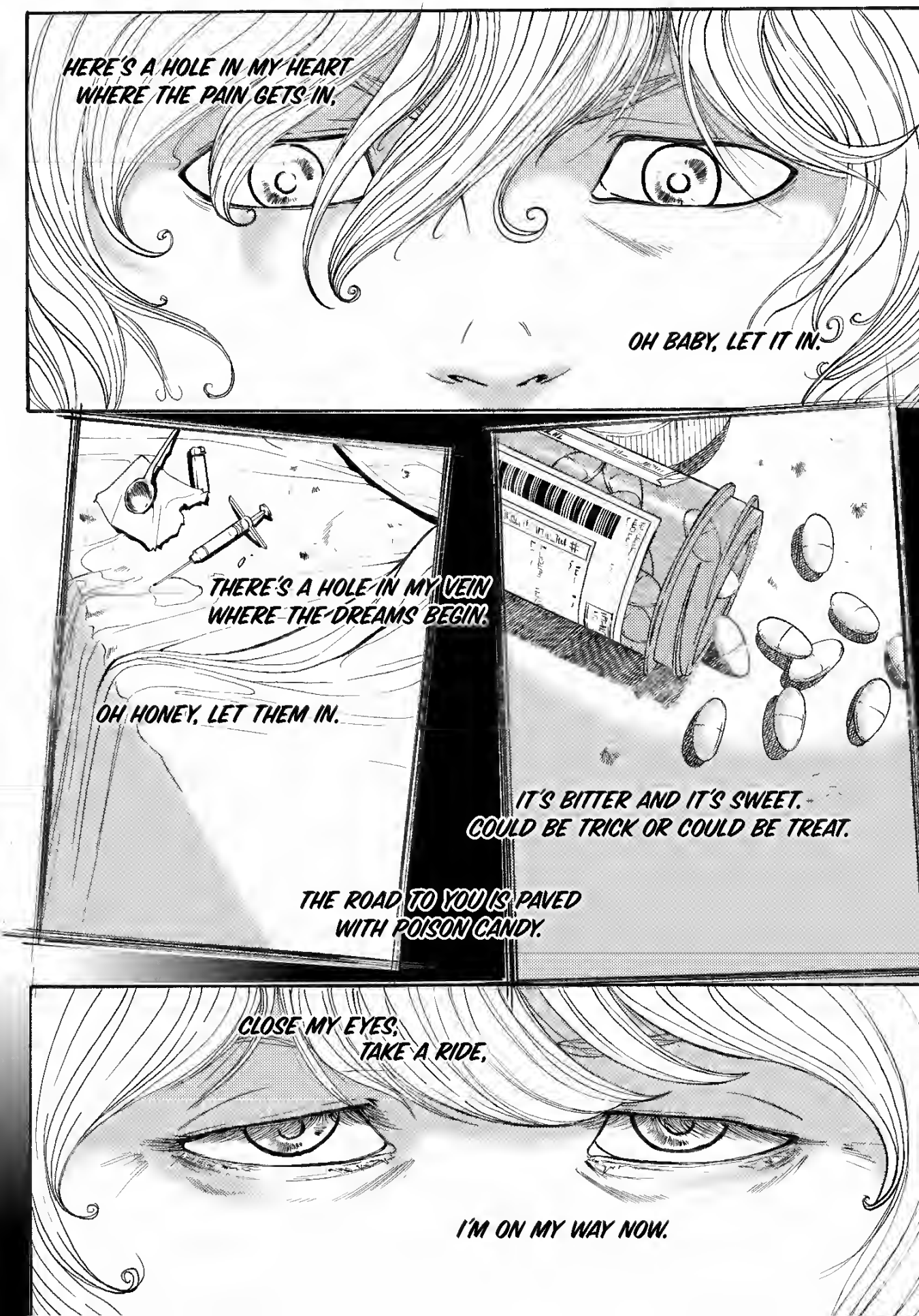

YOU GAVE HER DRUGS?!
YOU CALL THAT LOOKING OUT FOR HER?


DON'T JUDGE ME. YOU DON'T KNOW ENOUGH TO JUDGE ME.

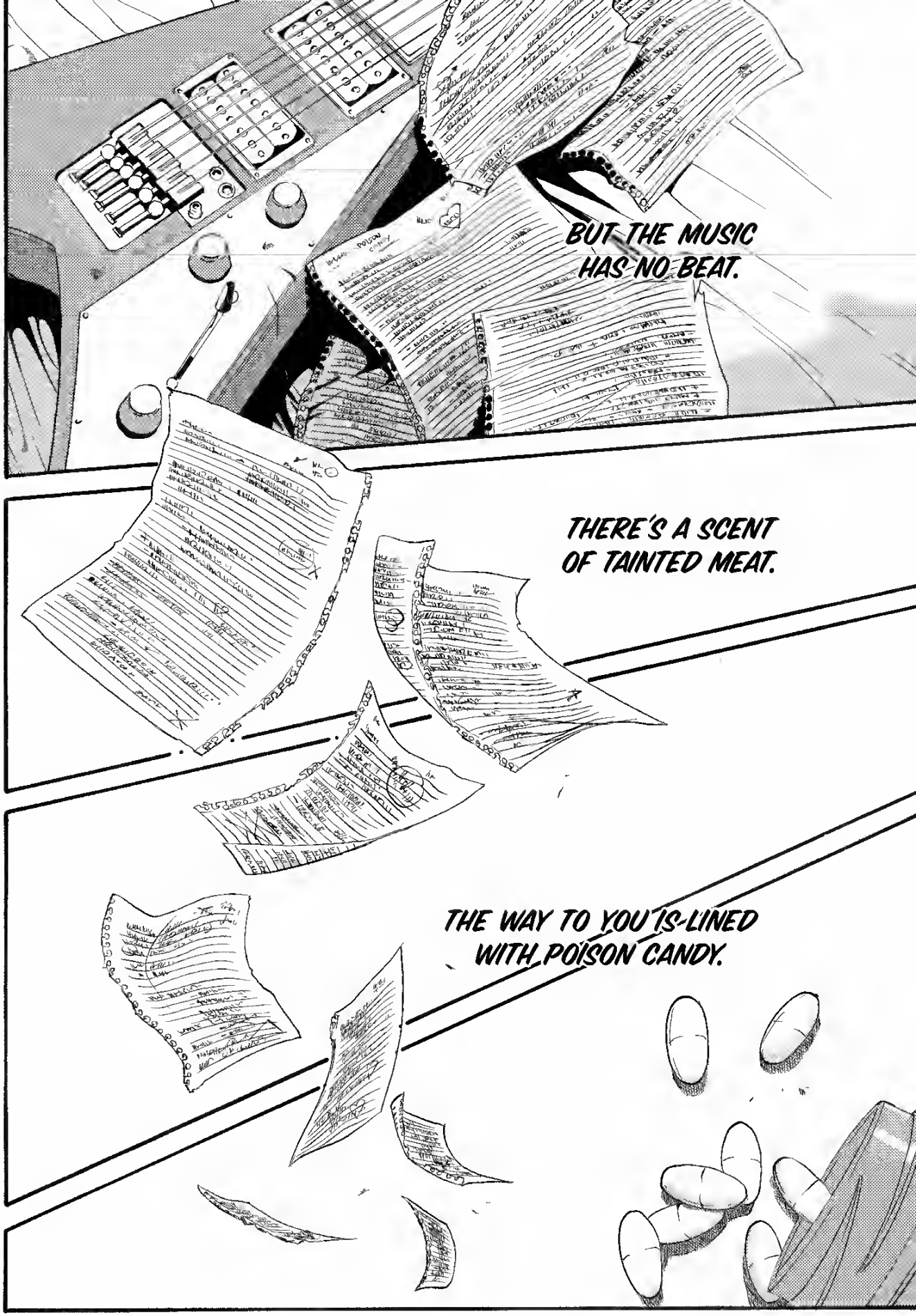
"THE DAY SHE DIED, I GOT AN ANONYMOUS CALL, TELLING ME TO GO TO THE STUDIO."
"THE AMBULANCE WAS ALREADY THERE."
DONNA!
"A LIMO DROVE PAST."
"I GUESS HE'D BEEN WATCHING HER TOO."
"IT WAS KOBAYASHI."

"THERE WAS MUSIC PLAYING INSIDE THE STUDIO. THE SAME SONG PLAYING OVER AND OVER ON A LOOP."
"IT WAS THE LAST SONG DONNA RECORDED."
OMNI WILL PLAY IT FOR YOU.
IT PLAYS MUSIC TOO?

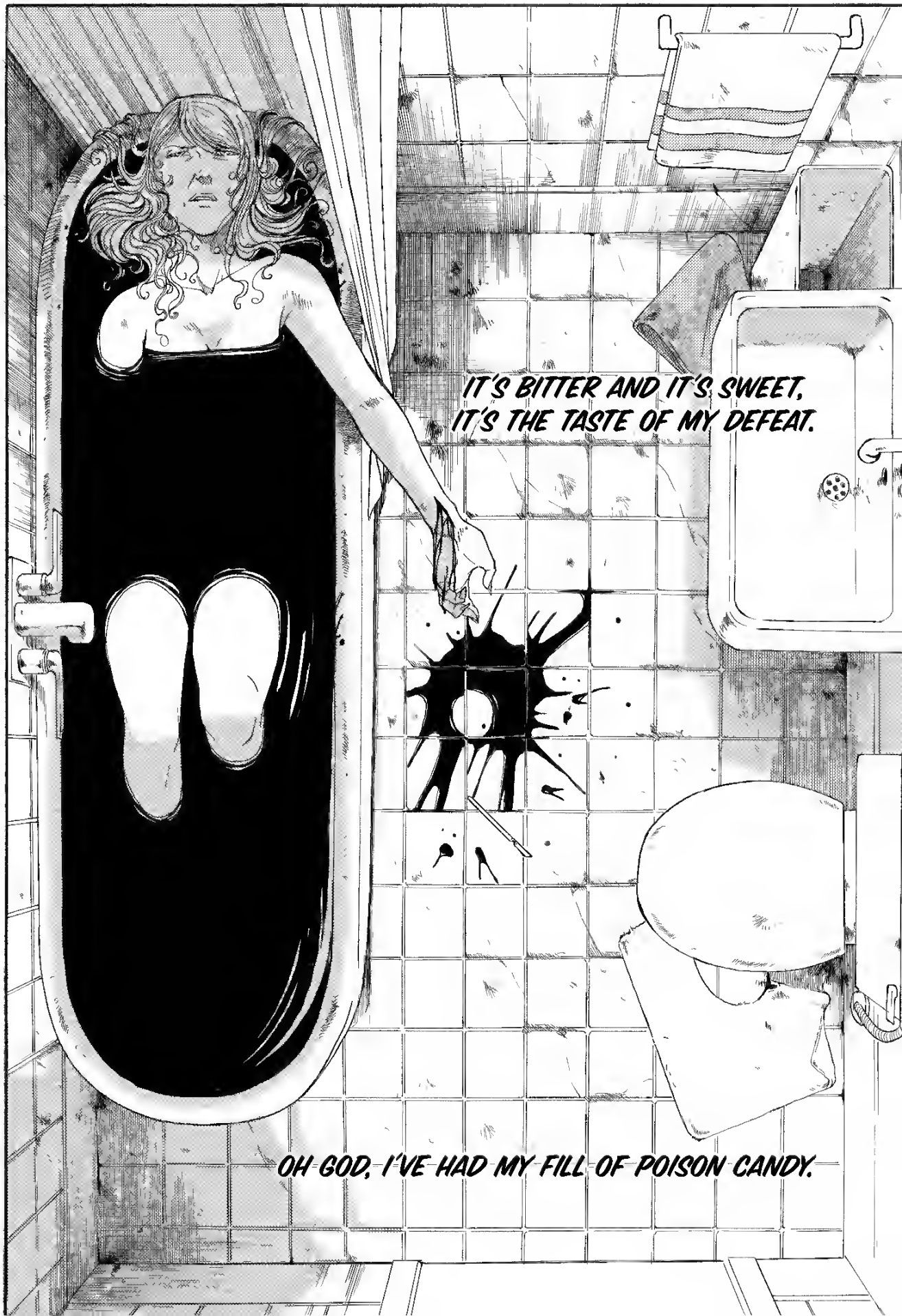
THERE'S AN IMPLANT IN YOUR HEAD. WE ALL HAVE ONE.
OMNI IS WHAT HAPPENED TO THE INTERNET.
EVERYTHING IS LINKED.
THERE'S UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO...
...TO EVERYTHING I GUESS.
AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT OMNI TELLS US.
ALWAYS THE CYNIC, YUSUF.
JUST PLAY THE SONG, OMNI.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO HEAR IT TOO?
NO.
SAM, THIS WAS RECORDED TWENTY-FOUR HOURS BEFORE THE DATE OF DONNA CHAMBERS' SUICIDE.
THE FILE IS NAMED *"POISON CANDY."*


HERE'S A HOLE IN MY HEART
WHERE THE PAIN GETS IN.
OH BABY, LET IT IN.
THERE'S A HOLE IN MY VEIN
WHERE THE DREAMS BEGIN.
OH HONEY, LET THEM IN.
IT'S BITTER AND IT'S SWEET.
COULD BE TRICK OR COULD BE TREAT.
THE ROAD TO YOU IS PAVED
WITH POISON CANDY.
CLOSE MY EYES,
TAKE A RIDE,
I'M ON MY WAY NOW.

THE BEAST HAS LEFT HIS MARK AND THERE'S LAUGHTER IN THE DARK.
THE WRINKLED HAND OF FATE WRITES MY NAME UPON THE SLATE.
I'M ON THE GUEST LIST TO THE PARTY AT THE CANDY HOUSE.
A HAG WAITS AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE CANDY HOUSE.
OH LADY, LET ME IN.
OPEN UP AND TAKE ME IN.


BUT THE MUSIC HAS NO BEAT.
THERE'S A SCENT OF TAINTED MEAT.
THE WAY TO YOU IS LINED WITH POISON CANDY.

CLOSE MY EYES,
SLIP ON BY,
I'M ON MY WAY NOW.
A HUNDRED YEARS NOW IN THIS PLACE. A THOUSAND TEARS ETCHED ON MY FACE.
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO THE EXIT FROM THE CANDY HOUSE.
WON'T SOMEONE LET ME OUT?


IT'S BITTER AND IT'S SWEET,
IT'S THE TASTE OF MY DEFEAT.
OH GOD, I'VE HAD MY FILL OF POISON CANDY.

CLOSE
MY EYES,
KISS THE SKY...,
...I'M ON MY WAY NOW.

CHAPTER 7: PLAYING WITH CUTLERY

"WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO SEE IS A DAILY TRAINING SESSION. THESE SESSIONS ARE USUALLY ONE-ON-ONE OR GROUP EFFORTS, BUT WE HAVE TO BE SURE THAT EVERY TEAM MEMBER IS PREPARED FOR ANYTHING."
"THIS IS BAMBI BERLIN. BEFORE ACQUIRING THE SKAR VIRUS, SHE PLANNED ON A MULTI-FACETED CAREER AS SUPERMODEL, DESIGNER, SINGER AND MEDIA CONSULTANT."
"SHE HAS AN IQ OF 175."

"YOU'VE ALREADY MET THE TWINS, ASTRID AND KASPAR ANDERSSON. THEY HAD AN ENORMOUSLY PRIVILEGED BACKGROUND, BORN INTO A SWISS FAMILY WHOSE WEALTH WAS ROOTED IN THE BANKING SYSTEM."
"IF THEY HAD NOT BEEN IN A CRYOGENICALLY-INDUCED COMA FOR THE PAST HUNDRED YEARS, THEY WOULD HAVE WITNESSED THEIR FAMILY LOSING EVERYTHING DURING THE ECONOMIC CRISIS OF 2009, A LOSS THEY HAVE TAKEN IN THEIR STRIDE."
"THEIR TELEPATHIC BOND ENABLES THEM TO OPERATE ALMOST AS A SINGLE ENTITY."

"THEIR COMBINED POWER IS FORMIDABLE."

"AGAINST EXPECTATIONS, BAMBI HAS PROVEN HERSELF TO BE ADEPT IN COMBAT SITUATIONS."

"AND PERHAPS A LITTLE OVER-CONFIDENT..."
IS THAT ALL YOU'VE GOT?
"MIKKI TRAVIS IS THE YOUNGEST SKAR SURVIVOR TO BE REVIVED SO FAR. SHE HAS A TROUBLED BACKGROUND THAT HAS LEFT HER WITH SOME UNRESOLVED ISSUES."
HEY, BAMBI!
CATCH!
BEEN THERE. DONE THAT. WORN THE T--

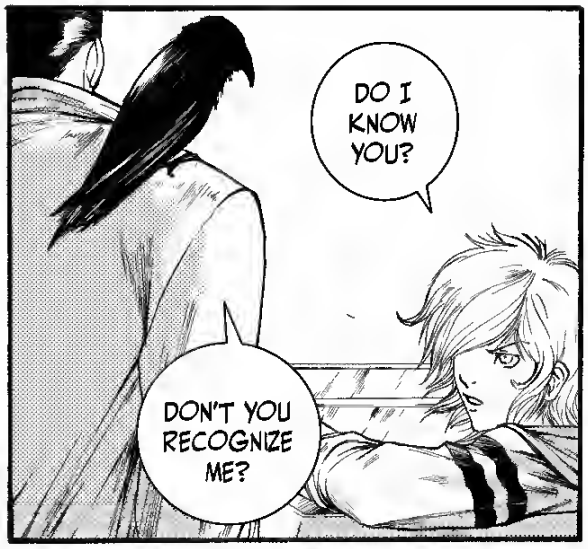
DAMN.
OW!
OW!
OW!
THAT WAS CARELESS, BAMBI.
YOU SHOULD HAVE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT THAT A SINGLE MISSILE WILL BE PROPELLED WITH MORE CONCENTRATED FORCE THAN MULTIPLE PROJECTILES.
YEAH, YEAH, YEAH.
I'LL FLAG THAT FOR FURTHER REFERENCE.
NOW CAN YOU DO THAT NANO THING ON MY HAND?

I'M GOING TO WITHHOLD NANO-SURGERY FOR NOW.
THIS IS A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO PRACTICE YOUR SELF-HEALING ABILITY.
IS THIS SOME KIND OF PUNISHMENT FOR SCREWING UP?
BECAUSE, IN CASE YOU'VE FORGOTTEN, THIS IS A VOLUNTARY SCHEME AND I CAN WALK ANY TIME I WANT.
WHO YOU GONNA RUN TO, BAMBI?
MOMMY AND DADDY ARE FEEDING THE WORMS AND WE'RE ALL THE FRIENDS YOU'VE GOT.
OH YEAH? WELL SCREW YOU, GIRL-FRIEND!

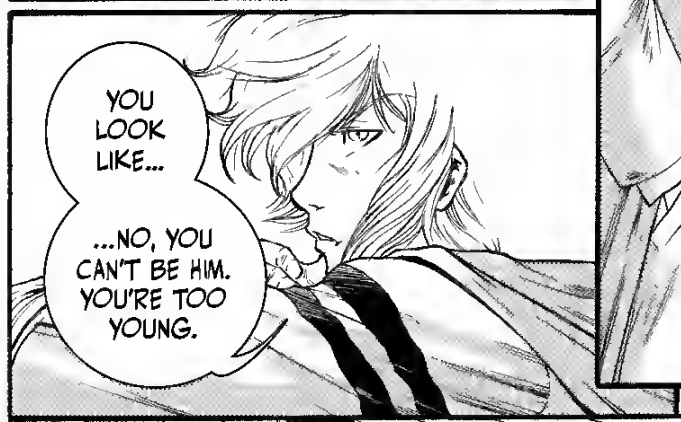
GEE THANKS, SOFOLA, BUT I ALREADY HAD IT.

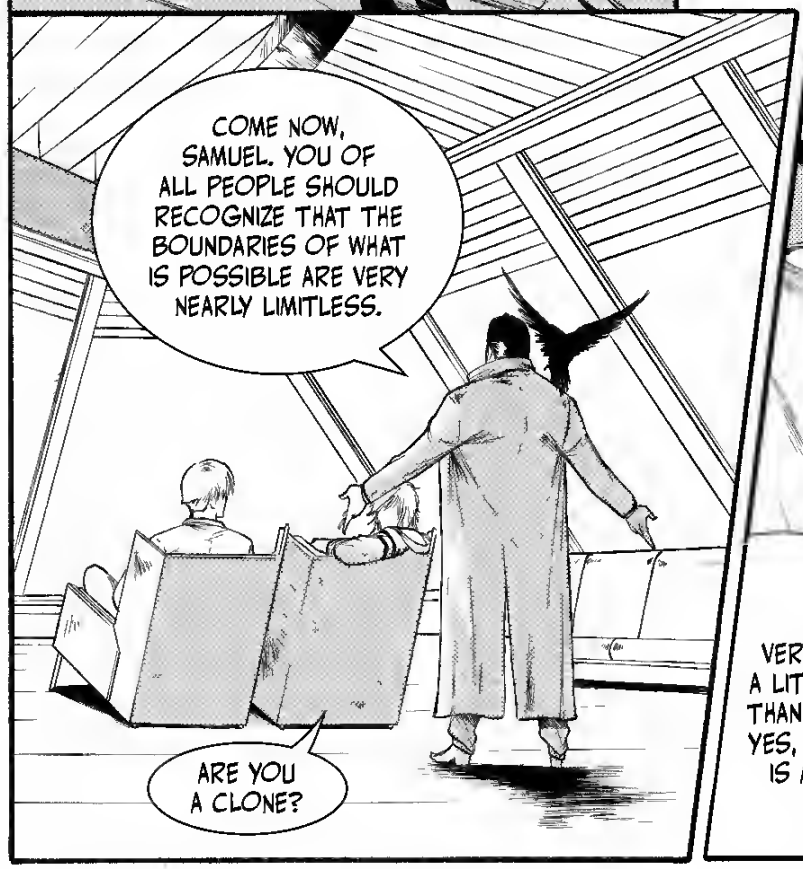
YOU'RE WELCOME.
"SOFOLA GOWANI. HIS PARENTS WERE LEADING WRITERS AND POLITICAL ACTIVISTS IN NIGERIA."
"HE HAS TAKEN AN OATH NOT TO USE HIS POWERS TO KILL. HE BELIEVES THAT ALL OUR AIMS CAN BE ACHIEVED PEACEFULLY."

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THAT, SAM?
DO YOU FEEL READY TO JOIN TEAM ALPHA?
I DON'T KNOW. THAT WAS PRETTY INTENSE.
IS IT ALWAYS LIKE THAT?
THESE TRAINING SESSIONS HAVE TO BE AUTHENTIC IF THE TEAM IS GOING TO SURVIVE IN REAL WORLD SITUATIONS.
RIGHT. THE TERRORISTS. I JUST DON'T GET IT. WHAT DO THESE TERRORISTS WANT?
JUDGING BY THE THINGS I'VE SEEN THE PAST FEW DAYS, THE WORLD IS ONE BIG PARADISE.
WHO WOULD WANT TO MESS THAT UP?
EVERY PARADISE HAS ITS SERPENT.


DO I KNOW YOU?
DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE ME?

THE BODY IS YOUNG, BUT THE MIND IS...
...WELL, I SOMETIMES FEEL QUITE ANCIENT.
I AM INDEED HENRY RAVEN.
THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE.


YOU LOOK LIKE...
...NO, YOU CAN'T BE HIM. YOU'RE TOO YOUNG.


COME NOW, SAMUEL. YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT THE BOUNDARIES OF WHAT IS POSSIBLE ARE VERY NEARLY LIMITLESS.
ARE YOU A CLONE?

VERY GOOD. A LITTLE MORE THAN THAT, BUT YES, THE BODY IS A CLONE.

IN THE THIRD DECADE OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, HUMAN EVOLUTION REACHED A POINT KNOWN AS *THE SINGULARITY.*
THIS WAS THE MOMENT WHEN NEUROLOGISTS DEVELOPED THE TECHNIQUES TO READ AND MAP EVERY PART OF THE HUMAN BRAIN...
...WHILE COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY SIMULTANEOUSLY ACHIEVED THE ABILITY TO CONSTRUCT A PERFECT REPLICA OF THE BRAIN, TO STORE THAT KNOWLEDGE.
IN OTHER WORDS, THE HUMAN MIND, THE ENTIRE PERSONALITY OF AN INDIVIDUAL COULD BE DIGITALLY COPIED AND EVENTUALLY DOWNLOADED INTO A CLONED BODY.
SO ARE YOU A COPY?
OR THE REAL THING?
A QUES-TION THAT PHILOSOPHERS CONTINUE TO DEBATE.
THE ORIGINAL IS DEAD AND BURIED BUT I CONSIDER MYSELF TO BE THE AUTHENTIC ARTICLE.
IN THAT CASE...

SQUAWK
AAAHH!
YOU PROMISED TO WAKE ME!
SAM! ARE YOU CRAZY?
FOR GOD'S SAKE, STOP THIS.
STAY OUT OF THIS!

IF HE'D WOKEN US WHEN HE SAID, DONNA WOULDN'T BE DEAD.
RAWWWK
SAM. IF YOU DON'T CALM DOWN I'M GOING TO HAVE TO DISABLE YOU.

I-IT'S ALL RIGHT, OMNI.
I C-CAN HANDLE THIS.
WHY?!
WHY DID YOU LET HER DIE?!
I-I'M SORRY F-FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO D-DONNA.
FUCK THAT! FUCK 'SORRY'!
YOU LET DONNA BELIEVE I WAS DEAD.
WHY WOULD YOU *DO* THAT?
I-I HAD NO CH-CHOICE.

NO ONE OUTSIDE OF THE CUBA BASE KNEW I WAS ALIVE.
EVEN MY OWN PEOPLE AT RAVENCORP BELIEVED I DIED ON THAT PLANE.
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL THEM THE TRUTH?
WILL YOU GIVE ME A CHANCE TO EXPLAIN?
I JUST... I CAN'T...
...AND YOU.
I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING CRAZY. THE ONLY PEOPLE I HAVE LEFT ARE AN OLD MAN WHO USED TO BE MY BEST FRIEND...

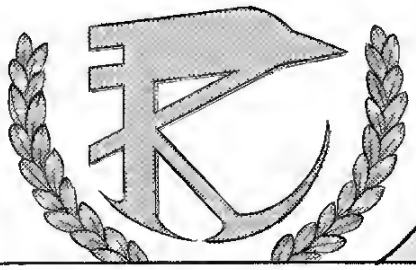
THEN YOU SHOULD LEARN TO TRUST ME.
MR. RAVEN, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I'LL LIVE.
YOU CAN GO. I'LL FINISH BRIEFING SAM MYSELF.

WELL, SAM, ARE YOU GOING TO LISTEN?
I GUESS.
I'M SORRY I DID THAT TO YOU. I KNOW IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT WHAT HAPPENED TO DONNA.
DID I HURT YOU?
ACTUALLY... YES.
I THINK YOU CRACKED A FEW OF MY RIBS.
BUT DON'T WORRY. WE CAN FIX THEM EASILY ENOUGH.
YEAH.
NANO-SURGERY.
SO WHAT ELSE HAVE I MISSED?

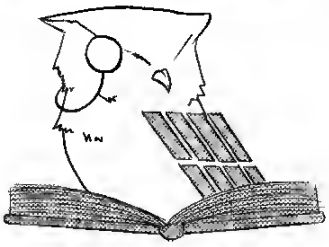
ONE HUNDRED YEARS IS A LOT OF HISTORY.
HISTORY WAS NEVER MY STRONG SUBJECT.
IF YOU WOULD SUPPLY THE VISUALS, OMNI.
OF COURSE, MR. RAVEN.
WE CAN FILL IN THE DETAILS LATER. WITH A LITTLE PRACTICE YOU'LL LEARN HOW TO ACCESS ANY INFORMATION YOU WANT FROM OMNI.
I THINK FOR NOW A RAPID OVERVIEW WILL BE ENOUGH.
LET'S START WITH THE LAST THING YOU REMEMBER.

"AFTER WE SET DOWN IN CUBA YOU AND THE OTHER SKAR SURVIVORS WERE PUT INTO CRYOGENIC SUSPENDED ANIMATION AS PLANNED."
"SOMEONE IN THE US GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED THAT MY PROJECT TO FIND A CURE FOR THE SKAR VIRUS HAD TO BE SHUT DOWN."
"TO GET THEM OFF OUR BACKS, THE WORLD HAD TO BELIEVE THAT OUR PLANE WAS DESTROYED AND THAT EVERYONE ON BOARD WAS DEAD."
Billionaire philanthropist dies in air disaster
"IN FACT, I CONTINUED TO WORK IN SECRET IN CUBA BUT THE CURE FOR YOUR VIRUS TOOK LONGER THAN EXPECTED. FAR LONGER."

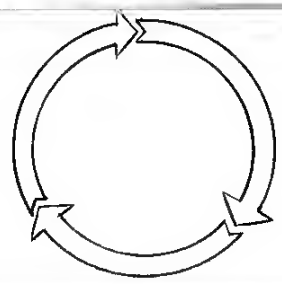
"MEANWHILE, THE WORLD CHANGED. GLOBAL CONGLOMERATES GREW IN INFLUENCE AND POWER UNTIL THEY WERE ABLE TO DISPLACE GOVERNMENTS, STARTING WITH THE THIRD WORLD, WHERE THE PEOPLE BECAME SO DISILLUSIONED WITH CORRUPT REGIMES THAT THEY LOOKED TO NEUTRAL GROUPS LIKE RAVENCORP TO PROVIDE SECURITY AND ECONOMIC STABILITY."
KEEPING THE PEACE
FEEDING THE WORLD
"EVENTUALLY EVEN THE LARGEST COUNTRIES TURNED AWAY FROM DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT WITH THEIR SELF-INTEREST AND IN-FIGHTING."
"THEIR LEGISLATIVE POWERS WERE GRADUALLY REDUCED AS THE LEADING GLOBAL COMPANIES MERGED INTO FOUR HUGE CONGLOMERATES WHO CARVED UP THE WORLD BETWEEN THEM. NOT GEOGRAPHICALLY, BUT BY MARKET SECTOR."



"RAVENCORP CONTROLS GENETICS AND BIOTECHNOLOGY."



"DESTINY TAKES CARE OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION."



"HAVEN SUPPLIES FOOD AND ENERGY."

"LOVECRAFT ADMINISTERS MANUFACTURING."

"THE US GOVERNMENT WAS REDUCED TO A FEDERATION OF STATE COUNCILS, WITH RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ROAD REPAIR, WASTE DISPOSAL AND, I BELIEVE, THE ISSUING OF DOG LICENSES."

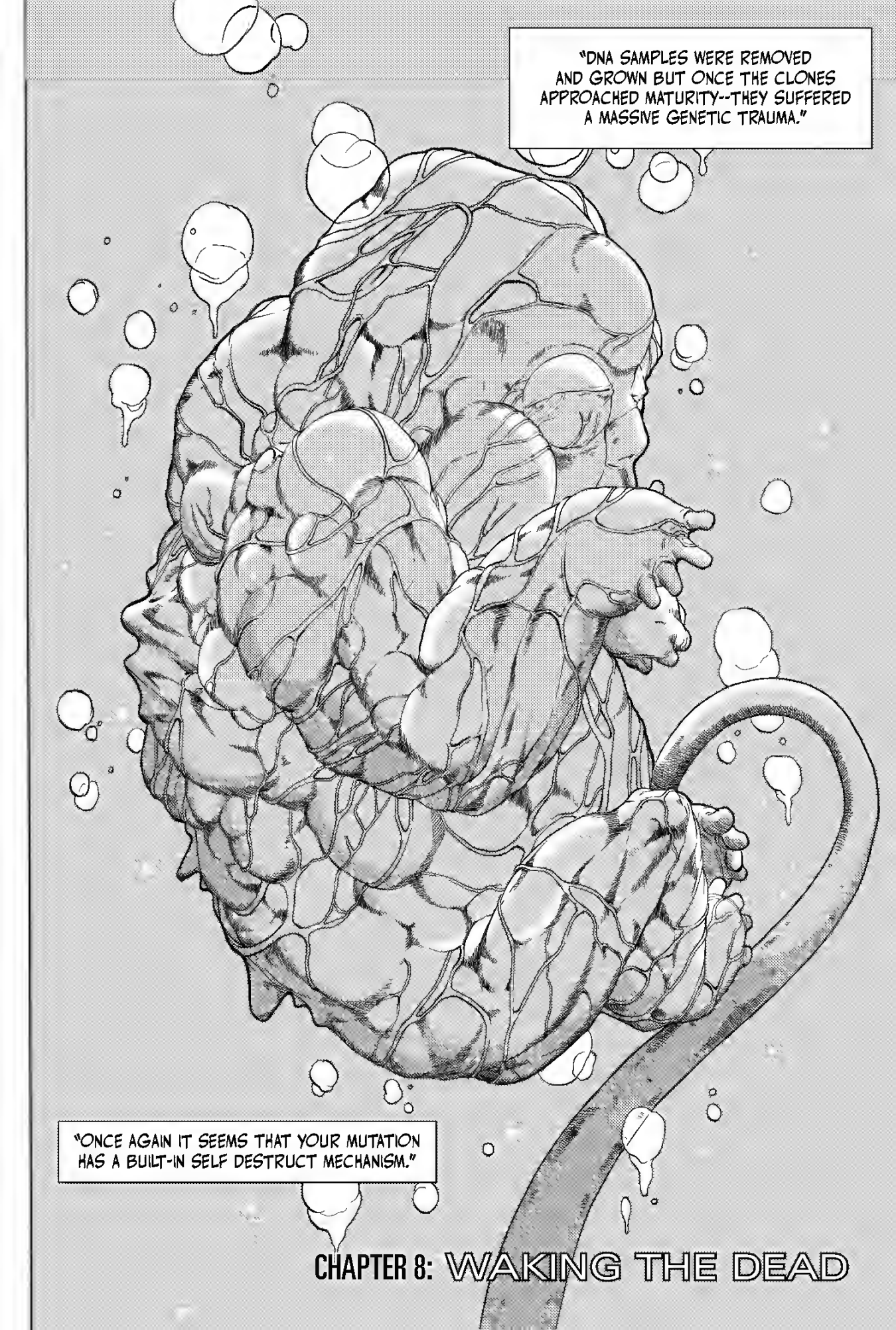
"I WAS ABLE TO RETURN FROM THE DEAD IN THE FIRST OF MY CLONED BODIES, TO TAKE UP MY POST AS CEO OF RAVENCORP."

"THE FOUR CONGLOMERATES WERE INDEPENDENT OF ETHNICITY, NATION AND RELIGION. WE WERE ABLE TO MAKE DECISIONS BASED ON THE WELLBEING OF MANKIND AS A WHOLE."
"IN 2078, A PROTOCOL WAS ESTABLISHED TO SAVE THE WORLD'S ENVIRONMENT. MAN WAS SEPARATED FROM NATURE. THE ENTIRE HUMAN POPULATION WAS BROUGHT INTO MASSIVE CITY-STATES, CONTAINED IN SELF-SUSTAINING ECO-SYSTEMS WITHIN SEALED DOMES."
"FED BY SIMILARLY CONTAINED FARMS AND MINES, POWERED BY SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCES, THE WORLD BECAME SELF-SUFFICIENT AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WAS ALLOWED TO HEAL ITSELF."

SO YOU GOT RID OF GLOBAL WARMING, POLLUTION, WAR, POVERTY AND DISEASE.
YOU MUST BE FEELING PRETTY GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF.
IT'S NOT A PERFECT WORLD YET.
YOU EVEN SOLVED THE PROBLEM OF GETTING OLD AND DYING.
IN THEORY, YES.
ONE BODY STARTS TO WEAR OUT, YOU CLONE A NEW ONE.
SO WHY IS YUSUF STILL TOTTERING AROUND IN HIS ORIGINAL SKIN AND BONES?
THERE ARE PRACTICAL REASONS WHY WE CAN'T ALLOW EVERYONE TO CLONE THEIR BODIES ON DEMAND.
PSYCHOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL REASONS.

IN YUSUF'S CASE, HE WAS OFFERED A REPLACEMENT BODY, BUT HE REFUSED.
I THINK HE MAY BE PUNISHING HIMSELF.
ONE MORE THING.
WHY DIDN'T YOU WAKE US BEFORE?

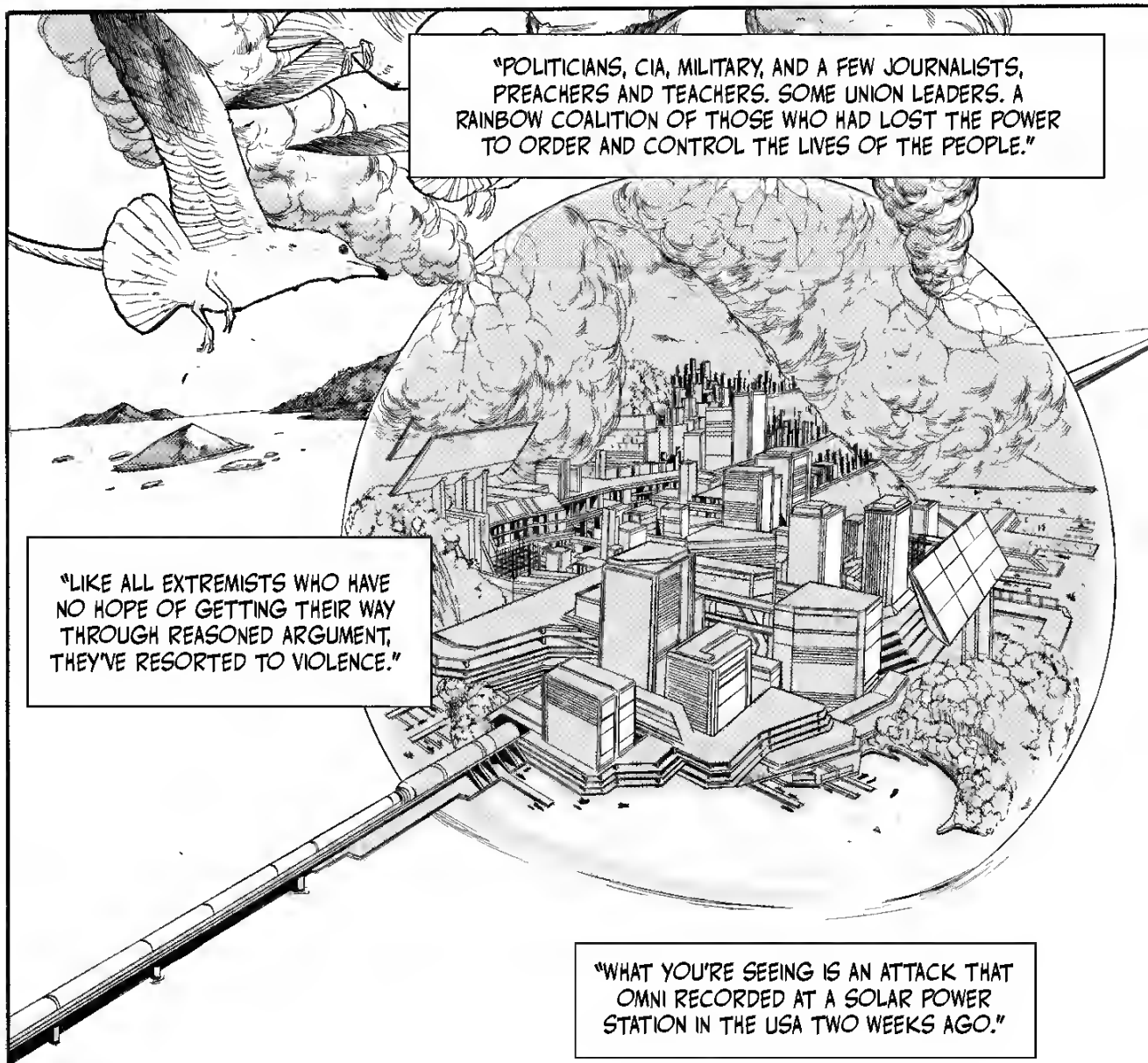
FINDING A CURE FOR THE SKAR VIRUS TOOK LONGER THAN ANTICIPATED.
THE VICTIMS' FAMILIES AND FRIENDS HAD LONG SINCE COME TO TERMS WITH THE LOSS OF THEIR LOVED ONES.
RE-UNITING THEM WOULD HAVE CAUSED A LOT OF DISTRESS ON ALL SIDES.
MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE DISCOVERED THAT THE GENETIC MAKE-UP OF SKAR SURVIVORS MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE TO CLONE YOU, AT LEAST WITH OUR CURRENT KNOWLEDGE.
OMNI, SHOW HIM THE RESULT OF THE TRIALS.

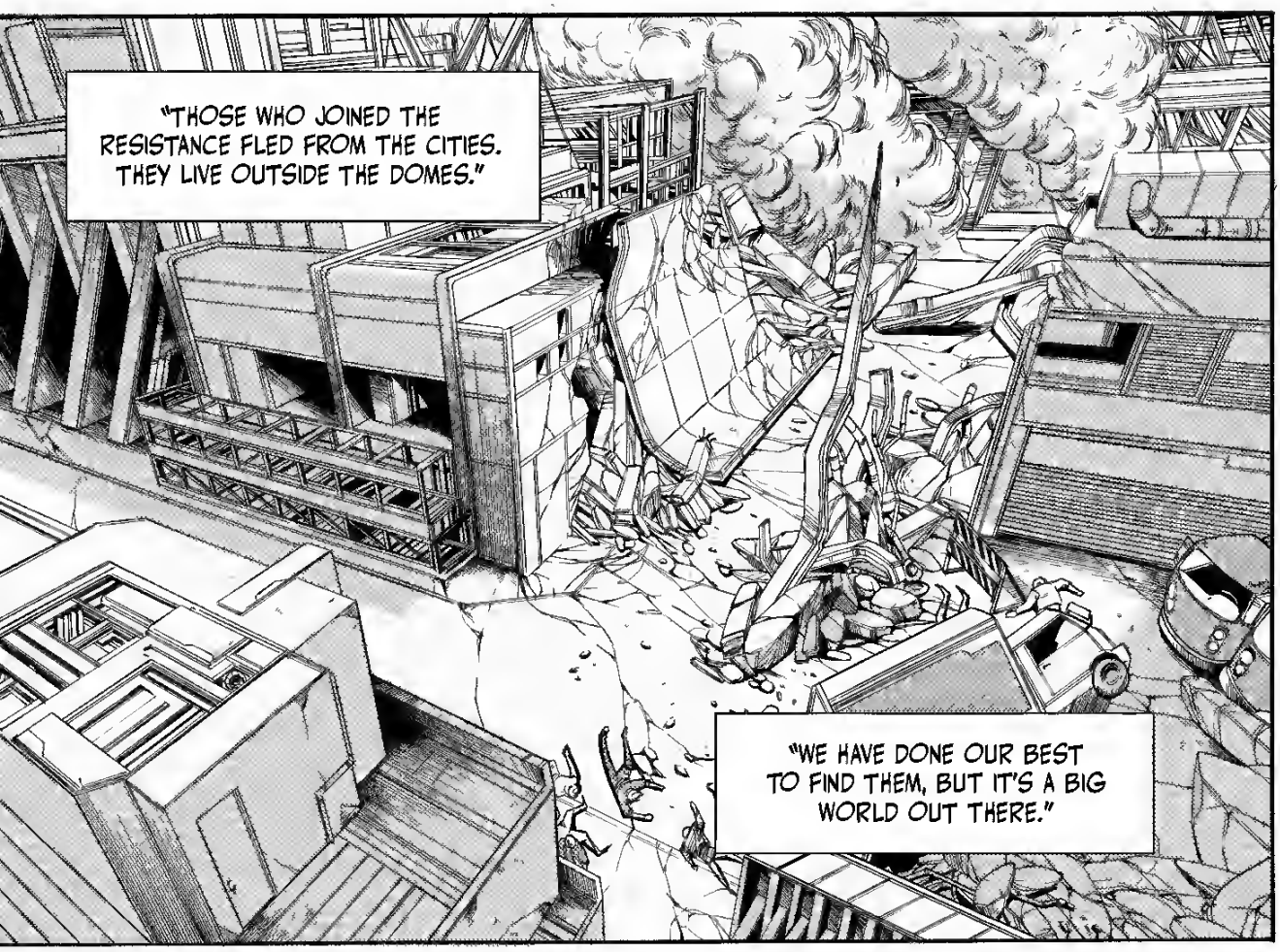

"DNA SAMPLES WERE REMOVED AND GROWN BUT ONCE THE CLONES APPROACHED MATURITY--THEY SUFFERED A MASSIVE GENETIC TRAUMA."
"ONCE AGAIN IT SEEMS THAT YOUR MUTATION HAS A BUILT-IN SELF DESTRUCT MECHANISM."

CHAPTER 8: WAKING THE DEAD

I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO LEAVE YOU ALL UNDISTURBED UNTIL WE'VE FOUND A SOLUTION.
THERE ARE SO FEW OF YOU AND IF YOU FAIL TO REPRODUCE, WE WILL LOSE THE NEXT STAGE OF HUMAN EVOLUTION, BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE.
A WHOLE NEW SUB-SPECIES.
SUB-SPECIES...
DOES THAT MAKE US SUB-HUMAN?
WHAT? NO, OF COURSE NOT.
IT'S JUST...
JOKING.

PERHAPS YOU SHOULD SEE THE REASON YOU WERE REVIVED.
AFTER THE CORPORATIONS TOOK OVER, THE LAST SUPPORTERS OF THE US GOVERNMENT WENT UNDERGROUND.


"POLITICIANS, CIA, MILITARY, AND A FEW JOURNALISTS, PREACHERS AND TEACHERS. SOME UNION LEADERS. A RAINBOW COALITION OF THOSE WHO HAD LOST THE POWER TO ORDER AND CONTROL THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE."
"LIKE ALL EXTREMISTS WHO HAVE NO HOPE OF GETTING THEIR WAY THROUGH REASONED ARGUMENT, THEY'VE RESORTED TO VIOLENCE."
"WHAT YOU'RE SEEING IS AN ATTACK THAT OMNI RECORDED AT A SOLAR POWER STATION IN THE USA TWO WEEKS AGO."


"THOSE WHO JOINED THE RESISTANCE FLED FROM THE CITIES. THEY LIVE OUTSIDE THE DOMES."
"WE HAVE DONE OUR BEST TO FIND THEM, BUT IT'S A BIG WORLD OUT THERE."

"THEIR EARLY ATTACKS WERE UNSOPHISTICATED AND INEFFECTUAL."
"MORE RECENTLY, THEY HAVE BECOME A SERIOUS THREAT."

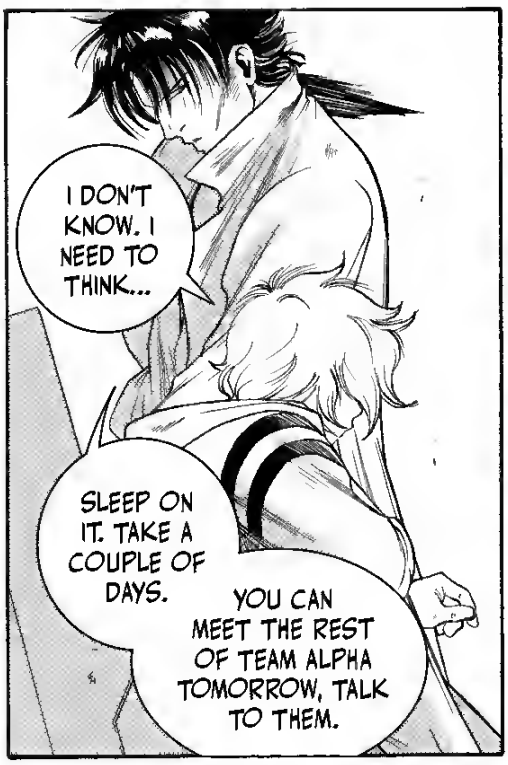
"WE BELIEVE THEY'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR CACHES OF WEAPONS IN HIDDEN MILITARY BASES."
"POSSIBLY THEY WERE HOPING TO FIND NUCLEAR WAREADS."
"THESE PEOPLE ARE CAPABLE OF ANYTHING."
"WE HAVE INFORMATION FROM A MEMBER OF THE RESISTANCE WHO WAS CAPTURED DURING A RAID."
"HE TOLD US THAT THEY FOUND SOMETHING IN AN UNDERGROUND FACILITY BENEATH THE NEVADA DESERT."
"SOMETHING MORE DANGEROUS THAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS..."

"...SLAUGHTERHOUSE NINE."

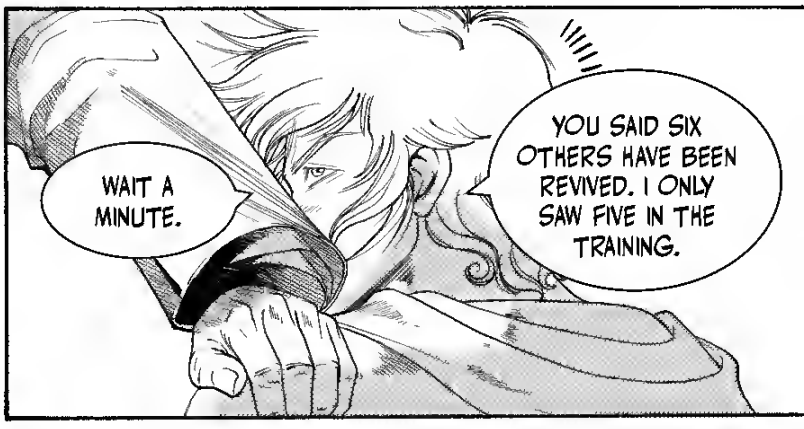
"SLAUGHTERHOUSE NINE WAS THE CODE-NAME FOR THE BASE WHERE THE US GOVERNMENT KEPT THEIR OWN SKAR VICTIMS ON ICE."
"WE DON'T KNOW THEIR ACTUAL NUMBERS. WE NEVER KNEW HOW MANY WERE SNATCHED BY THE SHADES."
"THERE COULD BE DOZENS."
"WHAT WE DO KNOW IS THAT THEY'VE BEEN COMPLETELY INDOCTRINATED..."

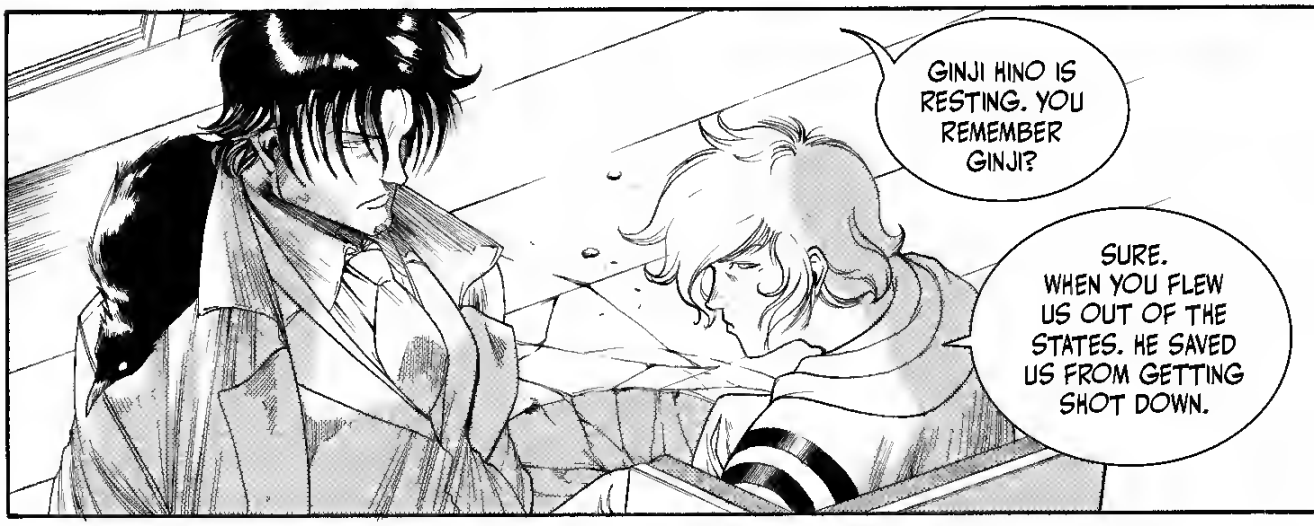
"WHATEVER TECHNIQUES THEY USED, YOU CAN SEE THE RESULT."
"SLAUGHERHOUSE NINE ARE MONSTERS."
"WE DON'T KNOW HOW IT WAS DONE. DRUGS, HYPNOTIC SUGGESTION..."

THIS IS WHY WE REVIVED YOU NOW. SIX BEFORE YOU AND THE REST OVER THE COMING DAYS. WE WANT YOU AND THE OTHER SKAR SURVIVORS TO BRING IN THESE TERRORISTS.
YOU'VE SEEN HOW BRUTAL THEY ARE. YOU'LL NEED TO BE TRAINED TO ENGAGE WITH THEM ON THEIR OWN TERMS, IF YOU'RE GOING TO SURVIVE.
KILL OR BE KILLED?
I CAN'T DO THAT.
I WOULD HOPE THAT THEY CAN BE TAKEN ALIVE SO WE CAN RE-CONDITION THEM.
KILLING THEM WOULD BE A TERRIBLE WASTE.


I DON'T KNOW. I NEED TO THINK...
SLEEP ON IT. TAKE A COUPLE OF DAYS.
YOU CAN MEET THE REST OF TEAM ALPHA TOMORROW, TALK TO THEM.

THERE'S NO PRESSURE, SAM.


WAIT A MINUTE.
YOU SAID SIX OTHERS HAVE BEEN REVIVED. I ONLY SAW FIVE IN THE TRAINING.

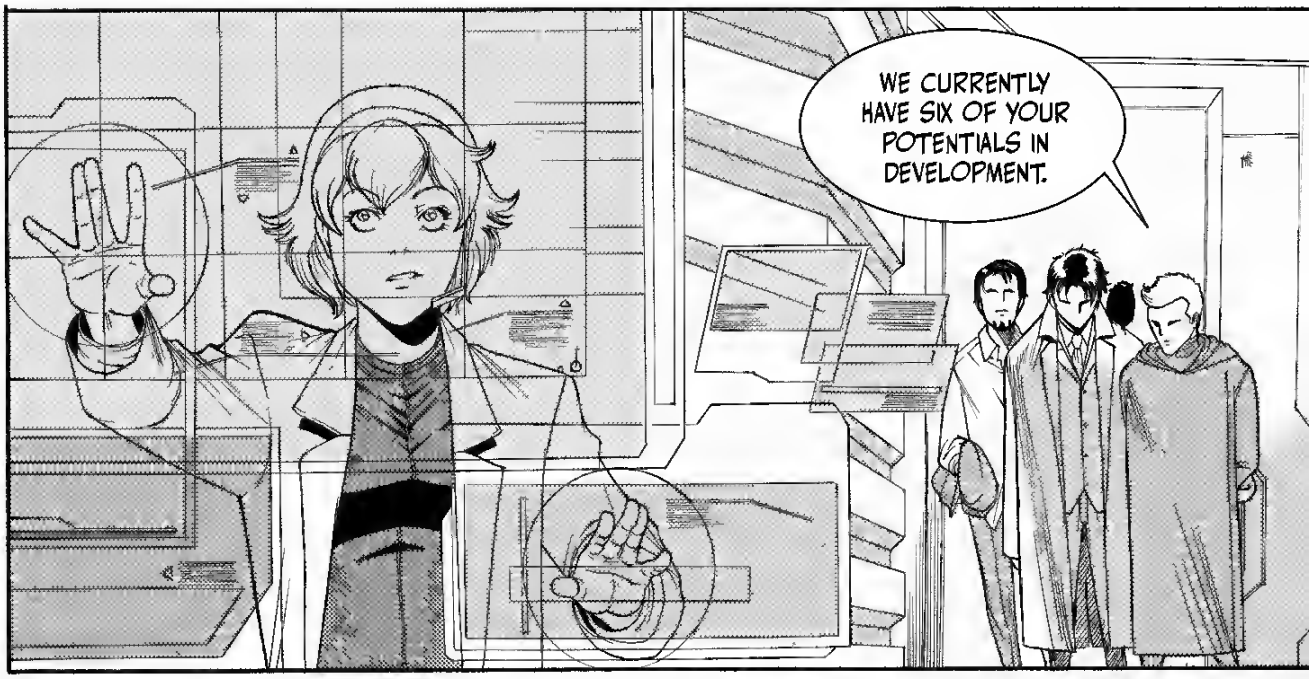

GINJI HINO IS RESTING. YOU REMEMBER GINJI?
SURE. WHEN YOU FLEW US OUT OF THE STATES. HE SAVED US FROM GETTING SHOT DOWN.

SINCE WE WOKE HIM, HE'S HAD SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS, BUT DON'T WORRY...
End Transmission...

"...WE'RE TAKING GOOD CARE OF HIM."
POOR GINJI.
IT'S A PITY. WE WEREN'T ANTICIPATING ANY TROUBLE FROM HIM.
HOW WILL YOU DEAL WITH HIM?
I SUPPOSE WE COULD TRY A MEMORY WIPE.

OR PERHAPS WE COULD JUST OPEN HIM UP.
I HARDLY EVER GET THE CHANCE TO POKE AROUND INSIDE A WARM BODY. IT'S ALL NANITES AND BIOSCANS THESE DAYS.
GOD, I MISS REAL SURGERY.
BLOOD AND GORE UP TO THE ARMPITS!
KOBAYASHI!
MR. RAVEN! WHAT'S WRONG?
THAT LITTLE BASTARD DOESN'T KNOW HIS OWN STRENGTH.
THE CHANCE BOY? WHAT HAPPENED?

HE -UNGGHH- LOST HIS TEMPER WITH ME. I THINK HE MAY HAVE HURT ME MORE THAN I THOUGHT.
OMNI, GIVE ME A DAMAGE ASSESSMENT.
MULTIPLE FRACTURES OF THE RIB-CAGE AS YOU CONJECTURED.
A RUPTURED SPLEEN. THAT WILL NEED IMMEDIATE ATTENTION.
MOST OF THE INTERNAL ORGANS HAVE SUFFERED MINOR DAMAGE, INCLUDING THE HEART AND BRAIN.
I RECOMMEND COMPLETE REST WHILE I CARRY OUT THE NECESSARY HEALING.
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THAT.
DR. MANGEL...
DO YOU HAVE A NEW BODY READY FOR ME?


WE CURRENTLY HAVE SIX OF YOUR POTENTIALS IN DEVELOPMENT.

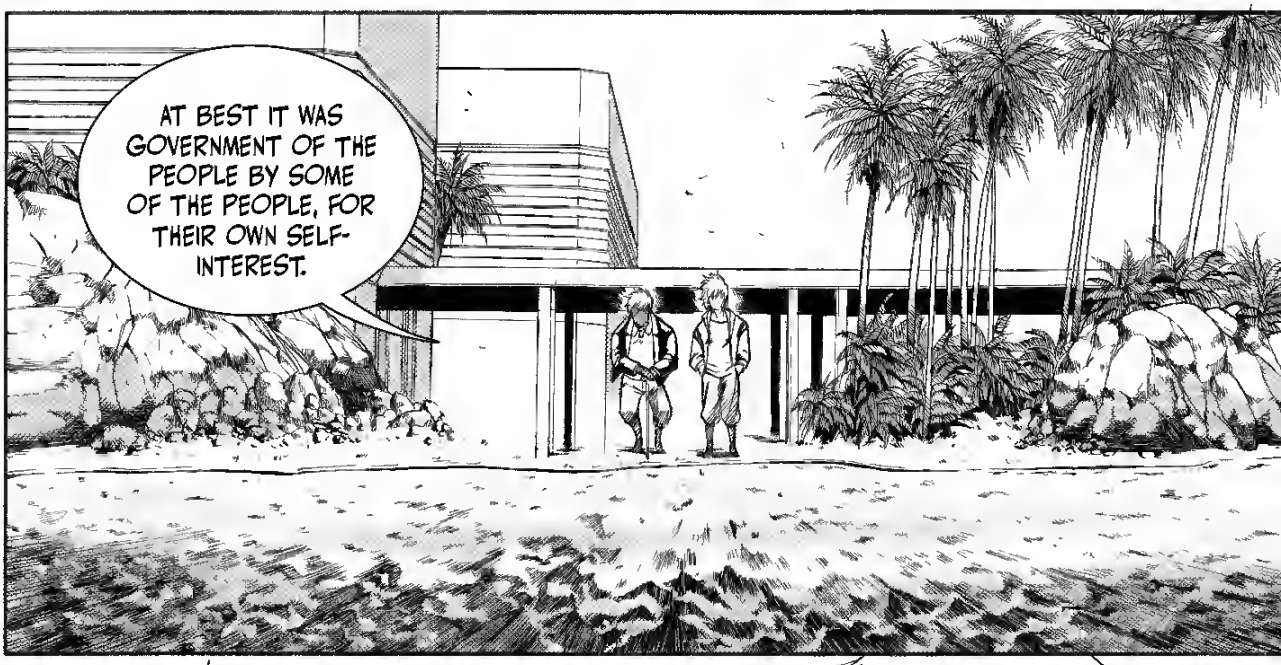
THERE HAS BEEN GOOD PROGRESS WITH GROWTH ACCELERATION.
WE'RE AIMING FOR A PERIOD OF LESS THAN THREE MONTHS FROM PRIMARY CELL-DIVISION TO ADULTHOOD.

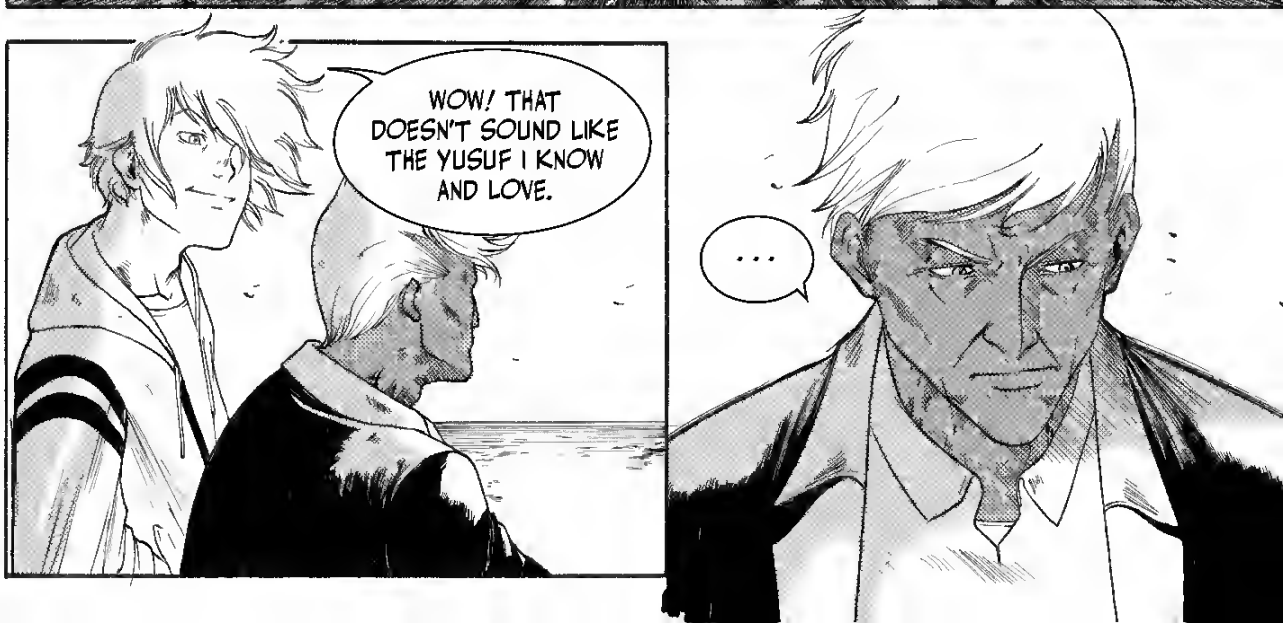
AS YOU SEE, WE HAVE MADE THE IMPROVEMENTS YOU REQUESTED.
THE MUSCLE TONE IS SUPERB.
WE'VE ALSO ENHANCED THE FACIAL FEATURES.
YOUR PHYSIOGNOMY IS RECOGNIZABLE BUT MORE...WELL...
...MORE PERFECT.
NOT PERFECT.
NOT YET.

WHAT ABOUT THE SKARS? SHOULD WE SCHEDULE MORE REVIVALS?
I WANT THEM ALL AWAKE WITHIN THE WEEK.
EXCEPT GINJI HINO.
HE STAYS WHERE HE IS FOR NOW.
AS SOON AS THE RESISTANCE KNOWS WE HAVE SKAR SURVIVORS OF OUR OWN, THEY'LL SEND SLAUGHTERHOUSE NINE AFTER THEM.
WE NEED TO BE PREPARED.
I'M NOT CONVINCED THAT OUR SURVIVORS WILL BE READY.
THEY'RE TOO IMMATURE, TOO INEXPERIENCED.
SAM CHANCE IS THE KEY. HE HAS THE STRENGTH, THE ABILITY, AND IF HE ONLY KNEW IT, THE POTENTIAL TO LEAD.
ALL HE LACKS IS THE *CONVICTION*...

RAVEN TOLD ME YOU REFUSED A CLONE.
CLONING IS RESERVED FOR THE ELITE, CORPORATE EXECUTIVES MOSTLY.
IT'S RARE FOR ORDINARY CONSUMERS LIKE ME TO BE GIVEN THE CHANCE TO EXTEND THEIR LIVES.
SO YOU SHOULD HAVE JUMPED AT THE CHANCE.

IT WAS A BRIBE, TO MAKE SURE I SAID THE RIGHT THINGS TO YOU.
YOU'RE VERY IMPORTANT TO THEM.
SO WHAT SHOULD I DO? IT SEEMS WEIRD TO BE FIGHTING A GROUP WHO SAY THEY REPRESENT DEMOCRACY.
DEMOCRACY IS OVER-RATED.


AT BEST IT WAS GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE BY SOME OF THE PEOPLE, FOR THEIR OWN SELF-INTEREST.


WOW! THAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE THE YUSUF I KNOW AND LOVE.
...

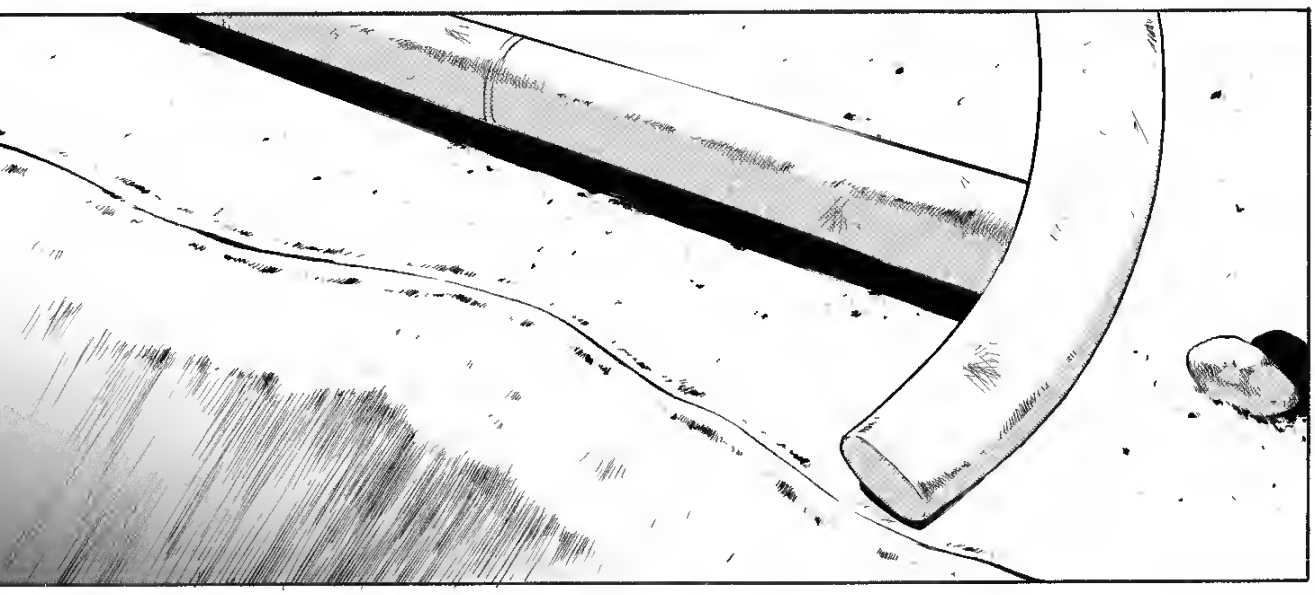
WHAT HAPPENED TO DONNA...
...IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT.
YOU KNOW THAT, RIGHT?
TAKE THE OFFER.
YOU'RE THE LAST FRIEND I HAVE.
WHAT WILL I DO WHEN YOU'RE GONE?
SAM, I'M GLAD I LIVED LONG ENOUGH TO SEE YOU AGAIN, BUT I'VE LOST TOO MUCH.

YOU'RE SO YOUNG, YOU WON'T UNDERSTAND THIS BUT...
...THERE'S A TIME TO DIE.

THIS MAY BE A GOOD TIME TO POINT OUT THAT THE CONCEPT OF PRIVACY IS A THING OF THE PAST.
THE SAME NANITES THAT FIX THINGS ARE JUST AS GOOD AT RECORDING EVERYTHING WE DO AND SAY.
OMNI REALLY IS EVERYWHERE... LITERALLY IN THE AIR WE BREATHE.
IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, I SEEM TO HAVE DEVELOPED THE ABILITY TO CONTROL THE ELEMENTS. AIR, WATER...
HOLY SHIT!

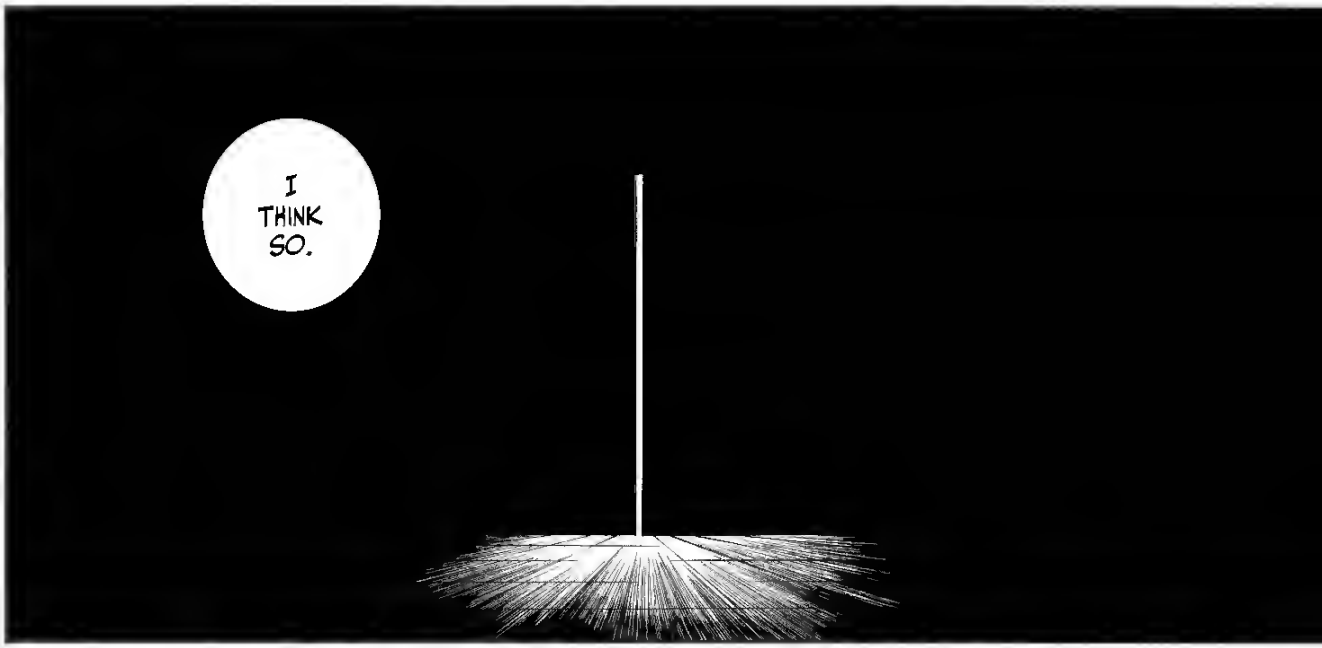
SO WHO CONTROLS OMNI? THE CORPORATIONS?
MAYBE.
MAYBE NO ONE.

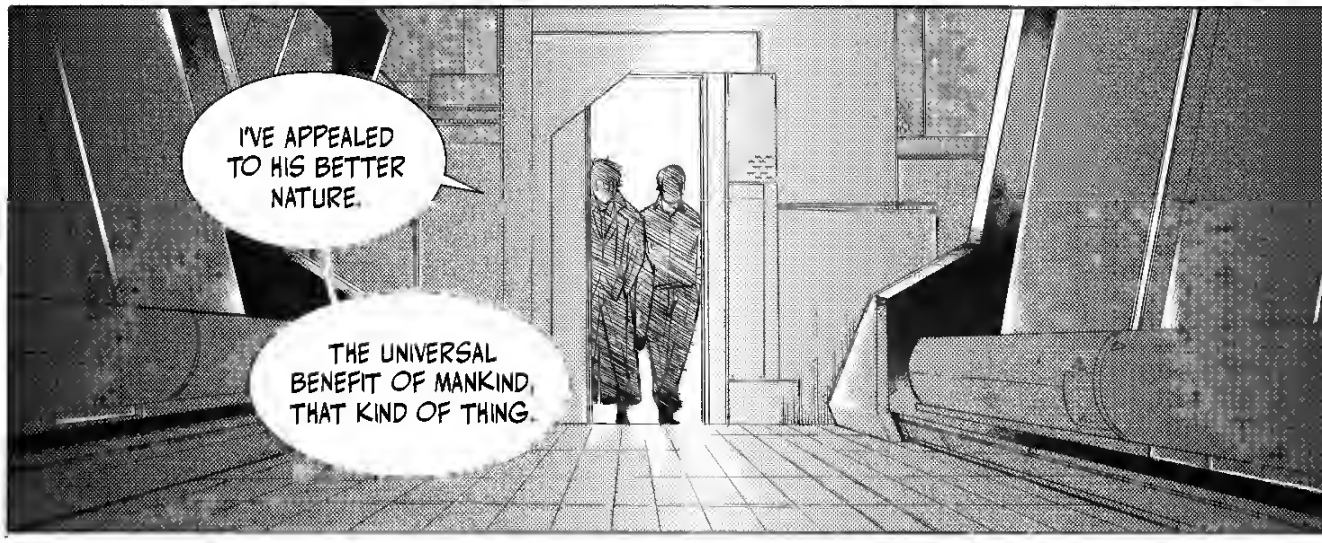
WOULD YOU DO SOMETHING FOR ME, SAM? I ALWAYS PLANNED TO ASK MARLOW SOME DAY.
SURE. NAME IT.
MAKE ME FLY.
YAAAAH!



WHAT'S HAPPENING?
I'M RUNNING INTERFERENCE ON OMNI. I'M DOING ALL THIS BY INSTINCT, SO I CAN'T SWEAR TO IT, BUT IF I'M GETTING IT RIGHT, THOSE FIREFLIES ARE EXPLODING NANITES.
I DON'T THINK OMNI CAN HEAR US NOW, SO TELL ME, SHOULD I TRUST RAVEN?
THERE'S VERY LITTLE IN THIS LIFE THAT I AM CERTAIN OF, SAM. BUT ONE THING I DO KNOW.
YOU NEVER, *EVER* TRUST THE PEOPLE IN POWER.

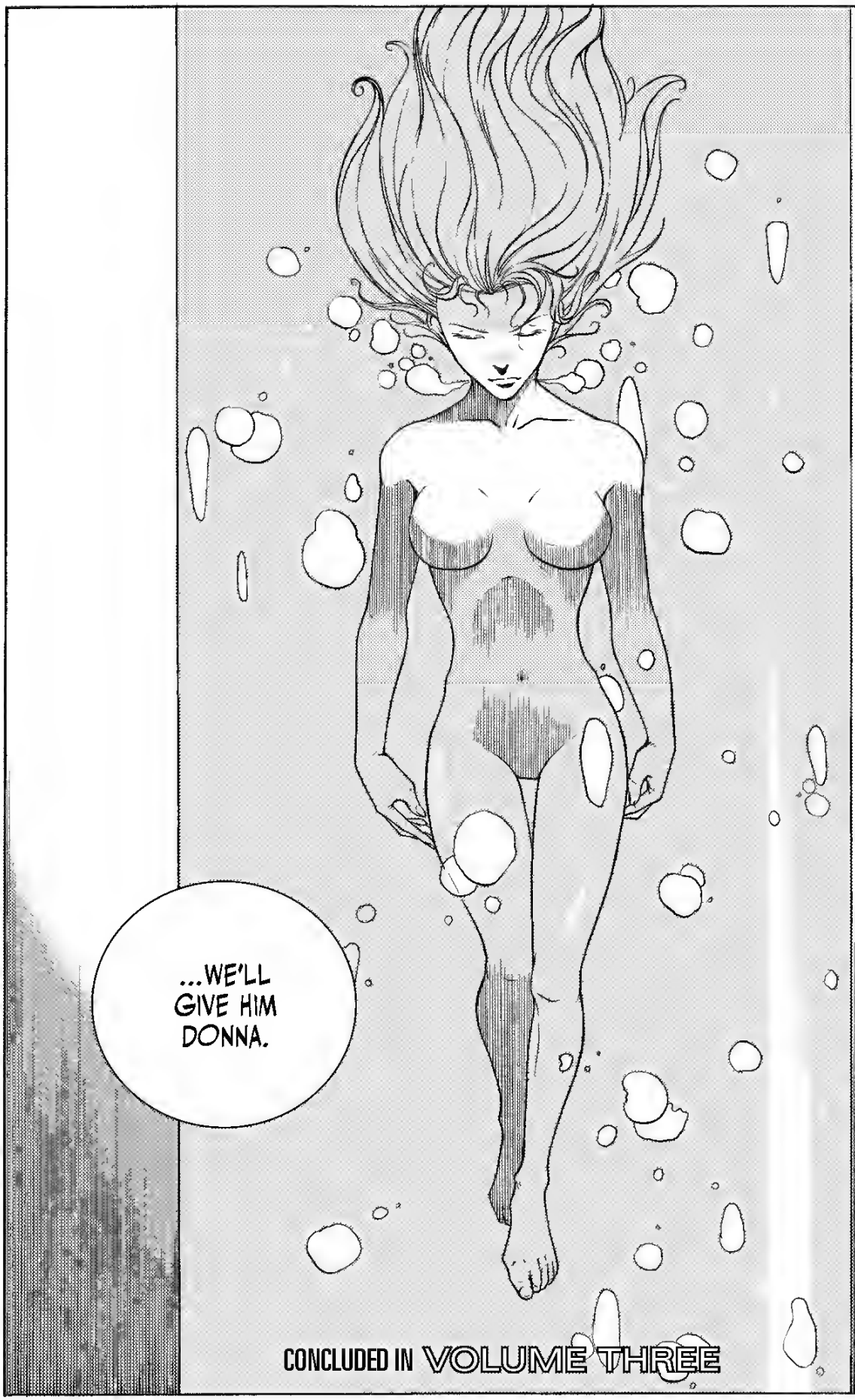
DO YOU THINK SAM WILL CO-OPERATE?


I THINK SO.


I'VE APPEALED TO HIS BETTER NATURE.
THE UNIVERSAL BENEFIT OF MANKIND, THAT KIND OF THING.

AND WHAT IF HE FINDS OUT THAT MOST OF WHAT YOU'VE TOLD HIM IS LIES?

TRUTH.
LIES.
THOSE ARE RELATIVE TERMS, NOT ABSOLUTE.
BUT IF HE DOES REFUSE TO CO-OPERATE, WELL...
...THANKS TO YOUR FORESIGHT, WE HAVE A TRUMP CARD, DON'T WE?
WE WILL OFFER HIM THE ONE THING THAT HE VALUES ABOVE ALL ELSE.
THE ONE THING HE WOULD DO ANYTHING TO HAVE...



CONCLUDED IN VOLUME THREE

poison candy
毒飴™

It's father versus son in the stunning climax of Poison Candy. Sam's choice to join Team Alpha leads to he and Marlow going head-to-head in a super-powered face-off. But when the awful truth about the nightmarish future to which he has awakened is revealed to Sam, Raven plays his trump card and Sam is force to choose between the woman he loves and the fate of the entire human race...

D.R. & QUINCH

K6 NW